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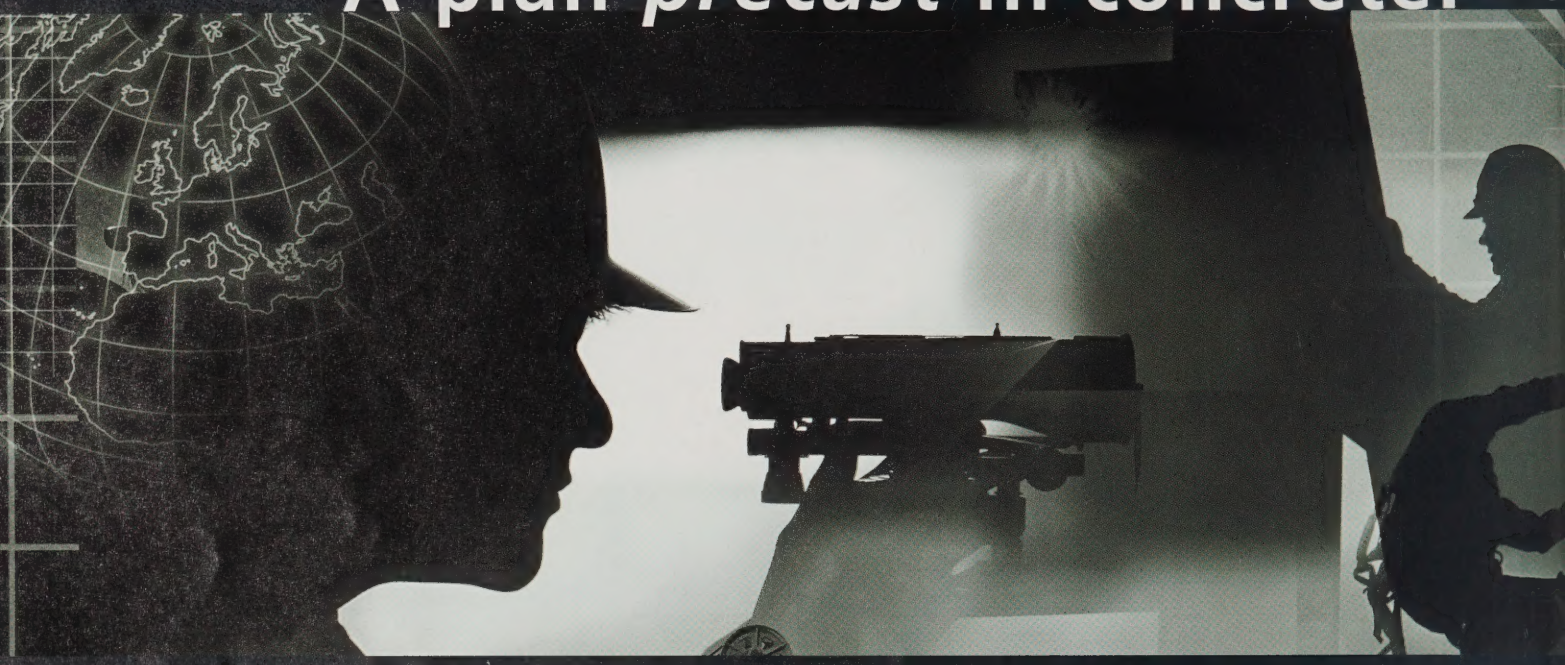

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ArchitectureBoston
Spring 2002
Preservation

We are defined by our acronyms. Today's NIMBYs stake their turf, arms crossed over their chests, in a peculiar form of passive defiance of any change in their backyards. They are the sniveling descendants of yesterday's LOLITS — the brave Little Old Ladies In Tennis Shoes who were among the pioneers of the preservation movement, routinely (if metaphorically) thwacking politicians and developers across the shoulders with their umbrellas, demanding to be heard. But the world has changed since then. Questions of sexism, ageism, and heightism aside, today's preservationists have upgraded their footwear to cross-trainers.

The great irony of preservation is that the movement itself has undergone continuous renewal, changing its focus from the lifestyles of the rich and dead to include the workstyles of the poor and dead. Preservation of landmarks expanded to include preservation of landscapes. And perhaps most surprising, preservationists began to talk less about old buildings and more about new buildings. In a field increasingly focused on development policy and politics, a genteel interest in art history is no longer enough. Today's preservationists are often tough negotiators who are equally skilled in the fields of finance, construction, law, and advocacy — as well as architecture, planning, and urban design. They were cross-training while everyone else was still going for the burn.

Now change seems to be in the air once again. There is a restlessness afoot, grumbles of discontent. In some quarters, respect for historic context turned to reverence and then proceeded, as Paul Byard notes, straight to righteousness. And there is nothing like righteousness to make Americans (New England skeptics, at least) wary, maybe even a little rebellious. Designers are frustrated by naysaying review boards. Critics worry that that we're building historical stagesets. But even some preservationists — some of whom appear in these pages — are also beginning to wonder if our veneration of history and context is stunting our ability to create vigorous, vibrant work that reflects our own era. Maybe, like vitamin A, too much contextualism can be bad for you.

Signs of change can also be seen in our language: "Historicist" is the latest term of disdain, best delivered with a sniff. The sudden appearance of the phrase "vintage Modern" (mercifully, Gropius did not live to hear it), suggests that the style train may be chugging on to the next stop — the '60s.

Which might not be a bad thing for either preservation or architecture. The 1960s and early 1970s represented an era when we allowed designers free rein with old buildings. One of the best examples is Harvard's Boylston Hall, originally built in 1857 and renovated in 1959 by Ben Thompson FAIA for TAC, its new undivided glass openings revealing the power of the granite structure. The Cambridge Historical Commission recently had the wisdom to endorse the proposal by Rob Olson AIA to continue Thompson's vocabulary in the latest renovations. Now 40 years later, Boylston Hall is teaching us another lesson: Old buildings, like LOLITS, aren't as frail as they might seem.

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA
Editor

2 **Letters to the Editor**

8 **Roundtable discussion:**
Moving Forward: The Future of History
Pamela Hawkes AIA; Tim Love AIA; Elizabeth Padjen FAIA; Albert Rex; Peter Rose; Charles Sullivan; George Thrush AIA

22 **Drawing from Piranesi:**
Age, History, and the Narcotic of Nostalgia
by Wellington Reiter AIA

25 **Preserving the Spirit:**
Photographs by Kenro Izu
by Elizabeth Padjen FAIA

36 **The Modern House in New England**
by David Fixler AIA

40 **Past Masters**
Paul Byard FAIA talks with Henry Moss AIA

50 **Letter from Florence**
by Peter Forbes FAIA

52 **Two Views: Preserving the Land**
Natural Landscapes
by Kathy Leahy
Designed Landscapes
by Ethan Carr

55 **Covering the Issues**
Periodical roundup
by Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA

56 **Books**

59 **Index to Advertisers**

59 **Site Work**
Web sites of note

60 **Other Voices: Cranbrook**
by Robert Saarnio

On the cover: Boylston Hall, Harvard University
Renovation (1998): Robert Olson + Associates, Boston
Original building (1857): Paul Schultze
Renovation (1871): Peabody and Stearns
Renovation (1959): The Architects Collaborative (TAC)
cover: fragment of photo by Steve Rosenthal

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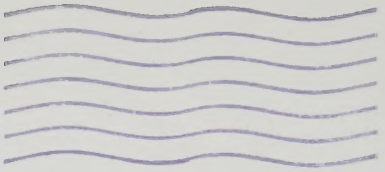
Letters



I would like to expand on several issues raised in your excellent roundtable, "Dramatic Devices: Entertainment and Spectacle in Architecture" [Winter 2001]. The subtext of debates on this subject seems always to revolve around authenticity and a concern that entertainment values corrupt the making of architecture. The more compelling issue should be one of *relevance*, and the ability of design to communicate the ideas and emotions of our time. "Entertainment" is simply code for an attitude that challenges us to integrate narrative, information, and other forms of content into our design vocabulary. This concept threatens because it says that form alone is not enough — in buildings, automobiles, or civic spaces — and that our culture now expects richer messages from its interaction with the designed environment.

The great lesson of entertainment design, culled from 150 years of world's fairs, guest attractions, and the theatrical arts, is that storytelling creates places. Modern architecture led us to believe that buildings shaped our perception of this illusive quality, and that its language gave environments meaning. The emerging practice of "experience architecture" uses techniques including narrative structure and media technology to promote a new conversation between buildings and people. In projects such as the Rose Center, Volkswagen's Autostadt, and Nike's retail flagships, the "entertainment idea" is raising architecture back to its status as a beacon of communication.

This is not to suggest that every building needs a plot. It is clear, however, that our citizen-guests seek to consume experiences, not forms, and that now is the chance for architects to reassert their role as environmental content providers.

Gregory Beck AIA
Architecture + Experience Design
New York City

I have always enjoyed *ArchitectureBoston*, but I was especially interested in the Winter 2001 issue, which featured articles and the roundtable discussion about the power inherent in architecture and the experience of theater.

For the last decade, I have led the fastest-growing opera company in North America. It has grown from 64th in budget size to 15th in a field of 115 professional companies. That growth has occurred despite the fact that Boston still does not have a "real" opera house — having razed the only theater actually built for opera. Since opera audiences tend to feel that opera is the ultimate "experience," we've had to create an environment and product that compensates for the lack of a "grand" opera house. We are fortunate to be producing our mainstage season in the beautifully renovated Shubert Theatre, which has the intimacy seldom found in the theaters in which most American companies perform. This compensates, in part, for our lack of a real opera house, which we will build one day.

Over the last decade, Boston Lyric Opera has been researching and tracking other theater projects in this country as well as in other parts of the world. The size and scope have varied significantly. But in almost every instance, be it renovation or new construction, the desire for a building and site that can help attract audiences has been a priority. We have come to recognize that the experience of theater can and should begin before we even enter a venue.

Joe Pine and Jim Gilmore, authors of *The Experience Economy* (Harvard Business School Press), state that "...every business is a stage, and therefore work is theater." As a society, we are seeking complete, transforming experiences that transport us for a period of time. Research on travel and tourism and data from the entertainment industry demonstrate

that our most prized commodity is now time, and therefore we look for life-enhancing experiences to fill our few leisure and learning opportunities. We are attracted to a wide range of experiences, from the natural, like the Grand Canyon and Yosemite Park, to the created, like Disney World and Las Vegas, and, more frequently, to designed ones like Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum Bilbao and the Glyndebourne Festival Opera's new theater and pastoral grounds.

"Experience architecture" does serve to help our diverse society find a common ground. We've spawned a new generation raised on multi-media multi-stimulation. It's no wonder that 18- to 24- year-olds, the smallest demographic group in the country, are the largest growth segment of opera's fast expanding audience. They've grown up in a world where everything exciting embodies a larger-than-life quality.

Architecture has the power to transform, to set the stage, to do what art should do — evoke feelings and intellectual discussion. If one believes that we are, in fact, living in an Experience Economy, then architecture, especially those environments designed for the arts, should seek to enhance the experience by exciting the senses and mind.

Janice Mancini Del Sesto
General Director
Boston Lyric Opera
Boston

Vernon Woodworth's "Ritual, Theater, and the City" [Winter 2001] has captured a central aspect of urban life that many of us subliminally acknowledge but do not articulate. Woodworth argues that we need to pay greater heed to factors that lend our cities vitality and, I would add, meaning: "theater, public ritual and…dramatic space."

In fact, Boston has done quite a good job of creating dramatic spaces that support drama and ritual, Copley Square being a prime example. Copley Square remains a space defined by some of Boston (and America's) "best" buildings. H.H. Richardson's Trinity Church narthex on one side and McKim, Meade and White's "People's Palace" (the Boston Public Library) on the other side of the Square offer theatrical backdrops as well as places to sit or get out of the weather. In the Square's park, users range from baggy-panted teenagers skateboarding between Boylston Street and the fountain to sedate, formally attired funeral-attendees waiting to enter Trinity. (On a warm October weekday, I saw both groups being watched by sunbathers sprawled on the lawn.) At a larger scale, Copley Square also serves many pedestrians disgorged by trains, subways, and buses all around the Square. Many of the transit-riding workers converge at the Square at rush hour.

Copley Square has the kind of characteristics Neo-Traditionalists and Smart Growthers admire. But the place evolved over a century, straddles quite diverse neighborhoods, and depends on a nexus of transit lines. And, perhaps most important, enormous care has been expended on its creation and development over the years. Are there lessons for more mundane spaces?

From my own experience as a planner, I know people want spatial centers. They want an authentic, distinct place where they can go for an ice cream, see people they know walking the dog every morning, or practice more formal rituals. The shapes these places assume differ radically, formed by history and community context. Of the spaces I know, Union Square Park (between 14th and 17th Streets in Manhattan) most vividly dramatizes Woodworth's observation that "the release of communitas energy is the goal of the ritual process." For weeks after 9/11, New Yorkers and visitors alike converged there creating a "participatory shrine" of candles, flowers, poems, and sculpture around George Washington's equestrian statue. Graffiti on the bronze horse read: "We need to grieve." On October 7th, Union Square Park became the staging area for New York's first peace demonstration (swelling to 10,000 marchers) during the current war. It is not accidental that Union Square was in the 1930s and 1940s the center for America's political left. Thus, I would argue that Americans need significant urban spaces for both our psyches and our polity.

Jeanne Van Orman AICP
Arlington, Massachusetts

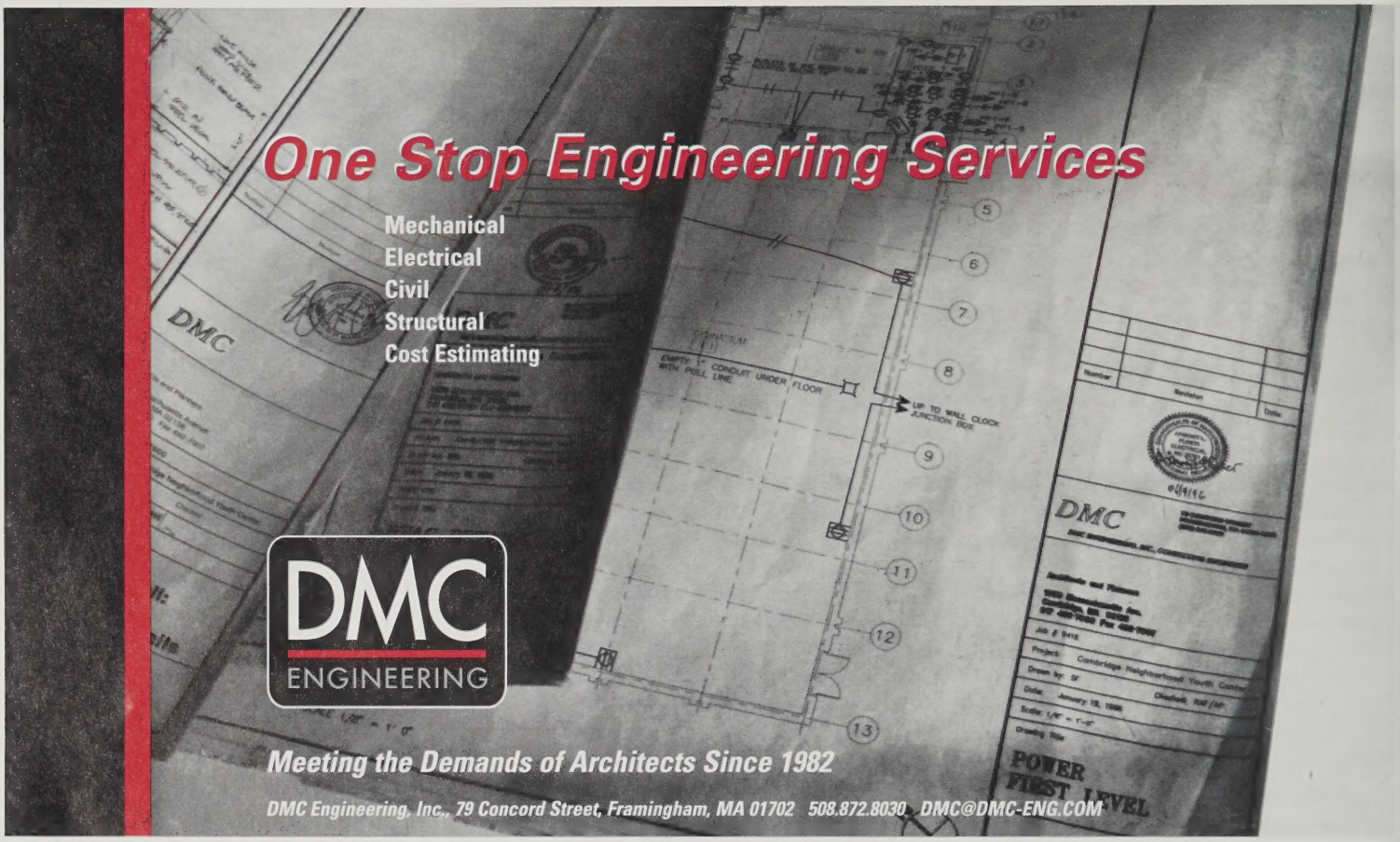
I was pleased to read Vernon Woodworth's article on communitas energy. It prompted me to recollect a trenchant mid-century analysis by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in which he compared the strengths and weaknesses of democratic capitalism with fascism and communism. In it, he suggested that the capitalist economic assumption that a free market efficiently allocates economic resources inclines its members to consider the fair pursuit of personal self-interest to be sufficient to being a good citizen. Eventually this results in loss of the understanding that sacrifice for the common good is a spiritual and ethical necessity for individual moral development, as well as good citizenship. The outcome is privatization of essential aspects of community, social atomization, destabilization, and the impoverishment of our public realm.

As Woodworth characterizes it, communitas energy is the return-on-investment made through this sacrifice for the common good. Perhaps one of the positive things that can come out of the tragedies of September 11 will be recognition that public participation as well as private consumption are a requisite for a healthy and strong society. Architects certainly have the potential and perhaps the responsibility to increase our stores of communitas energy. Doing so can only advance our profession's value as well as its authority.

Russel Feldman AIA
Newton, Massachusetts

Correction:
Jerold S. Kayden, whose book *Privately Owned Public Space* was reviewed in our Fall 2001 issue, was identified incorrectly. He is an associate professor of urban planning at the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

We want to hear from you. Letters may be e-mailed to: epadjen@architects.org or sent to: *ArchitectureBoston*, 52 Broad Street, Boston, MA 02109. Letters may be edited for clarity and length and must include your name, address, and daytime telephone number. Length should not exceed 300 words.



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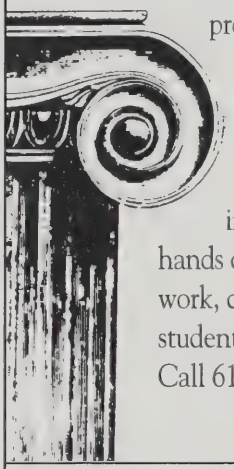

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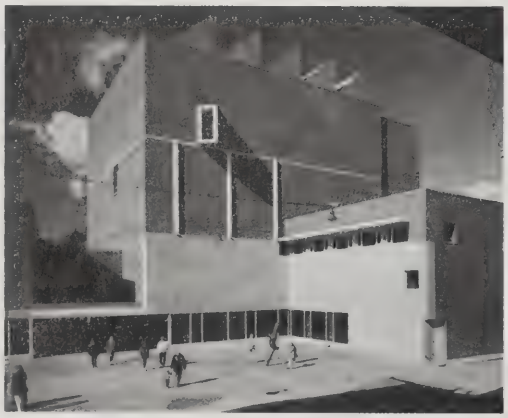

Steva Rosenthal

The Davis Museum and Cultural Center at Wellesley College, *winner of the Boston Society of Architect's Harleston Parker Award 2000.*

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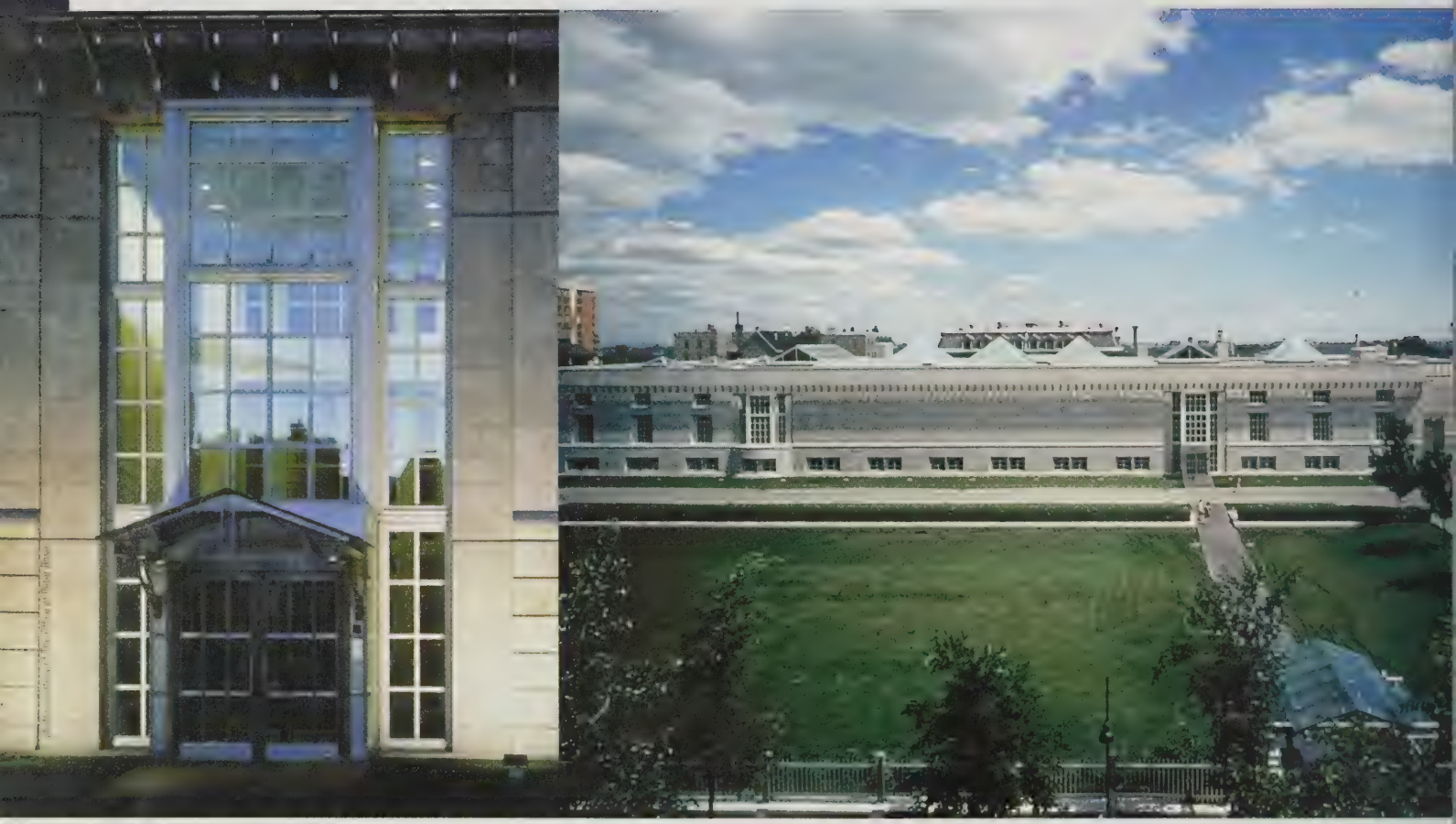


Canadian Centre for Architecture
Montreal, Quebec

Architect: The Office of Peter Rose
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Elizabeth Padjen: Let's start with an overview of the evolution of preservation in Boston, starting in the '60s. How have our attitudes about historic buildings changed?

Albert Rex: Boston established its first historic district, on Beacon Hill, in the 1950s, but it wasn't until the 1970s that we started to see real grassroots preservation activity. The City Conservation League, which doesn't exist anymore, was formed in the late 1960s and was concerned with issues affecting the downtown. A good early example was the

ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS:

Pamela Hawkes AIA is a principal of Ann Beha Associates in Boston and a member of the Boston Landmarks Commission.

Tim Love AIA is vice president of Machado and Silvetti Associates in Boston and is a lecturer in architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

Elizabeth Padjen FAIA is the editor of *ArchitectureBoston.*

Albert Rex is the executive director of the Boston Preservation Alliance.

Peter Rose is the principal of The Office of Peter Rose in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and of Peter Rose Architecte in Montreal. He is an adjunct professor of architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

Charles Sullivan is the executive director of the Cambridge Historical Commission.

George Thrush AIA is the chair of the department of architecture at Northeastern University.

Jordan Marsh controversy in the early 1970s. Jordan Marsh decided to replace its downtown department store, and suddenly we had people cutting up Jordan Marsh cards and standing in picket lines to protest the loss of that building. I think that may have been the first real step toward the grassroots activism we know today. It was formalized in Boston with the establishment of the Landmarks Commission in 1976, which provided a sounding board for preservation discussions. Then the grassroots organizations that had sprung up banded together to form the Boston Preservation Alliance in 1978. Of course, other groups had been around for a while, like Historic Boston, which was formed to save the Globe Corner Bookstore back in the '60s. But most preservation prior to the '70s had happened on a neighborhood scale as civic associations or historical societies tried to save individual structures. With each battle, the groups became more effective and more professional. At the same time, we started to see a growth in preservation programs; today, there are approximately 20 graduate-level preservation programs in the country. Most preservation organizations today are staffed by people who went to school to become professional preservationists.

Pamela Hawkes: The Jordan Marsh controversy was also significant because it was one of the first times that people didn't associate a building's importance with a particular person or historic event. Boston has an incredible legacy of preservation dating to the 19th century, but its focus until recently was on the landmarks, the buildings where something famous happened or someone famous lived. Jordan Marsh was the beginning of an understanding that the real importance can be the context — that important buildings are not necessarily architectural markers but sometimes are part of a heritage that represents everyday life and everyday people.

Charles Sullivan: That was a major cultural shift. The demolition of the West End in 1959 generated a huge amount of anger. But it was anger in the neighborhoods. It wasn't anger in the preservation community, because there wasn't such a thing as a preservationist in the 1950s. As an avocation, maybe, but not as a profession. The old-line preservation groups were simply not interested in the Jordan Marsh issue. SPNEA [Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities] and the Bostonian Society were focused on the famous men and events of the 17th and 18th centuries. It took the City Conservation League — which was brand new and, for that time, a very radical and obnoxious community group — to get people mobilized.

Pamela Hawkes: And now we see preservation as a critical component of economic development, instead of viewing old buildings as discouraging economic development, which is what the demolition of the West End was all about.

George Thrush: We've also seen an evolution from the preservation of a single building to the preservation of a street to the preservation of entire districts or communities where the historical character seems to be central to the value of the whole place. We need to recognize that preservation has really served as one of the few restraints on the free market in urban

real estate. The only limitations on the development of cities come from the preservation movement and the environmentalist movement. They're the only shared non-market values that we seem to have codified. Preservation and historical authenticity have emerged as the default expressions of shared meaning, because we don't have any focused criteria for evaluating newer buildings, other than to say they're too tall or too big or too shiny.

Albert Rex: That didn't happen until relatively recently. When the Boston Preservation Alliance was formed in the 1970s, our mission was very clear: we focused on the buildings that were being lost.

Boston Public Library, Allston Branch

Architect: Machado and Silvetti Associates, Inc. Boston

photos: © Michael Moran

We began to realize that the old buildings were actually better built than anything we were building; the materials and craftsmanship were better. I think that the preservation movement owes as much to the quality of the building fabric as it does to urban-design issues or the idea of heritage.

Tim Love AIA

We didn't really think about the impacts of newer construction. It wasn't until later, when people started looking for sites for very large new buildings, that we started to think more broadly. We made a deliberate change and said we can't look only at saving the old; we have to understand the impacts of the new on the old.

Pamela Hawkes: It's also interesting to trace a parallel development and look at what the architectural profession was doing. In the 19th century, architects were totally involved in preservation, which they saw as a tremendous resource for design. When Modernism came in, things changed. The last thing architects wanted to do was something that related to the past. If anything has happened in the last 20 years, it is that once more it's OK to consider that the historic context might contribute to your design.

Tim Love: The transformation of the preservation movement from the famous-men-and-events phase to a general interest in preserving almost anything old is an important cultural watershed that also reflects on the profession in other ways. Those old buildings had a material quality that suddenly was worth saving. By, say, 1973, we began to realize that the old buildings were actually better built than anything we were building; the materials and craftsmanship were better. It's a little bit like the problem with the American car industry in the '70s, when everybody in the know bought foreign cars because the Buicks in 1973 were so tinny. I think that the preservation movement owes as much to the quality of the building fabric as it does to urban-design issues or the idea of heritage. With a few exceptions — maybe a couple of Lou Kahn and Gordon Bunshaft buildings — most American postwar buildings are pretty dismal affairs. And the American consumer is actually very perceptive about issues of material quality. Look at architects themselves. If you're an architect, unless you're very rich, you live in an old house and restore it. You don't design a house for yourself, because you can't achieve the same level of *gravitas* and luxury as you can living in an old house. It has to do with the perceived quality of things as much as ideology and reverence for the past.

Elizabeth Padjen: You're getting back to an idea that George introduced earlier: values. We've seen changing values on the part of both the public and the profession over the last 40 years. I recently heard an NPR interview with a Middle Eastern ambassador who said, "We want to be seen as tolerant and progressive." The interviewer responded with the appropriate positive murmurings. Tolerant and progressive. If you think about it, those are the buzzwords for our cultural values right now. And that ambassador was smart enough to recognize that. One wants to be tolerant and progressive. A century ago, maybe one wanted to be honorable and chaste, I don't know. But we are obviously seeing shifts. I wonder if we are seeing something in the built environment that reflects broader cultural values that permeate other aspects of our society.

Charles Sullivan: I think that's exactly right. A lot of the move toward preservation in the '70s and '80s was a reaction to the Corbusian movement that began in the 1920s, when fascism was taking root. Le Corbusier was really, in his concept of isolated towers surrounded by green spaces, as much of a social engineer as the fascists were. We now see that as a very anti-human value, as our thinking about cities changed following Jane Jacobs' lead in the 1960s. Like anything, architecture and planning follow cycles. American cities in the postwar period were desperate for investment. All the growth was taking place elsewhere, outside the cities. Federally subsidized urban renewal programs came along, and the Corbusian approach to planning was what was available. So we ended up with the West End and Government Center, where the Boston Redevelopment Authority took out all the urban fabric, just shaved it right down, and started fresh. But that's a very conscious sort of social engineering. It generated a tremendous reaction, and Jane Jacobs was the least of it. Planners and designers eventually followed the public's lead and moved away from comprehensive redevelopment and toward the idea of working with an existing urban context and character. But I think the cycle is starting to shift again and the design professions are trying to move away from contextualism.

Tim Love: I think most of the battles today are fought on a different level: new building versus old building. Not new urban design versus old urban design, because that isn't a battle any more. We're beyond that, because 99 percent of the architects practicing today, across the ideological spectrum, understand how cities work, understand that streets are important, and understand that we need buildings that are active at the street level. The battles now are more specifically around languages and ideology, and around this question of quality and value of the old relative to the new. The Hans Hollein proposal for Harvard Square [*see page 13*] is a good example — that's the kind of battle we will see more of.

Charles Sullivan: I'm delighted the Hollein project did not get approved, but I'm horrified that that is the one that's going to become the poster child for anti-preservationists. Harvard University *finally* put forward a Modern building, and unfortunately that was the one that they presented. To those of us who look at these issues every day and care about them, it created a preposterous and maddening situation. People hated it or loved it; you were automatically a Modernist or an anti-Modernist, and there could be no middle ground.

Tim Love: I agree with you. We've just finished the Allston library, which is maybe two miles from the Hollein site. It was a very lengthy, difficult, consensus-building approval process, working with a building committee appointed by the mayor. The day we first walked in, they said, "We want a red-brick building with a gable end and green shutters." We said, "Can we try something else? Give us a chance." So we worked with that group, which included a

schoolteacher, a church volunteer, and community leaders, to understand why they wished that the library could be an old building. We discovered it had more to do with quality than with age or specific style. Through this long therapy process, which probably went on much too long, we got at the root problems they had with Modern architecture, which had to do with the quality of the construction and the level of planning. We took them on a field trip to similar libraries, and they were right — there are some really bad contemporary libraries around Boston. But we also visited buildings that were considered appropriate and contextual that were actually horrible places. We took them to three examples with red brick and symmetrical gable ends that had bad acoustic ceilings, cheap vinyl floors, and rickety aluminum shopfronts. And that reverse argument was very successful with this committee. We were able to convince the community that we could do a contemporary building *and* pay careful attention to the way the building was crafted. It came down to the quality of things, not to heritage or style.

Elizabeth Padjen: That story also represents a fundamental shift in the way the public looks at old buildings, and consequently, the way architects design for them. That building committee, like the public in general, was looking at old buildings as objects of quality that they would aspire to. There was a time when attitudes were completely different — get rid of that old stuff, because we deserve something new and shiny. Now we see that attitude in developing countries and, perhaps condescendingly, despair of such backward thinking. But we didn't blow out the West End for no reason.

Pamela Hawkes: It's not an attitude that has completely died. We have neighborhoods with historic buildings and residents who say, "Listen, these things have been sitting around for years with bums hanging out in them. Get them out of our neighborhood." They don't see the possibilities, that these buildings could be wonderful housing. They want to demolish them because they feel they deserve something new and better.

Charles Sullivan: But don't you think what we all have to do is what Tim did with his building committee? People in general don't have any sense of architectural values. We certainly see this in Harvard Square, where developers learned in the 1970s that all they had to do to satisfy the community was to put in red brick — better still, Kane Gonic red brick — and it would fly. And that's in a sophisticated community.

Pamela Hawkes: What I think we need is a television program called "This New House," that talks about the craft of modern construction.

George Thrush: I totally agree. Most people take for granted the advances in building technology that are now part of our normal lives. We expect a lot, but we don't know how to articulate our criteria. We need to define public values other than simple preservation.

Albert Rex: But it's also a question of who's making the design decisions. Architects come in to see us all the time with their proposals. We tell them, "We want to see something that people will want to preserve in future years." And they say, "Well, the developer wants to expend 'x' number of dollars, so we're only allowed to do 'y,' and the BRA is telling us this but the community says that, and now you folks are telling us something else." We end up with this design-by-committee process with a constant struggle over who really has the most influential voice.

Elizabeth Padjen: So is it even possible to get that maybe-mythic structure that we all have in mind when we say we want a fabulous new building in Boston?

Albert Rex: I don't think we even know how to first answer the question, What is a great building?

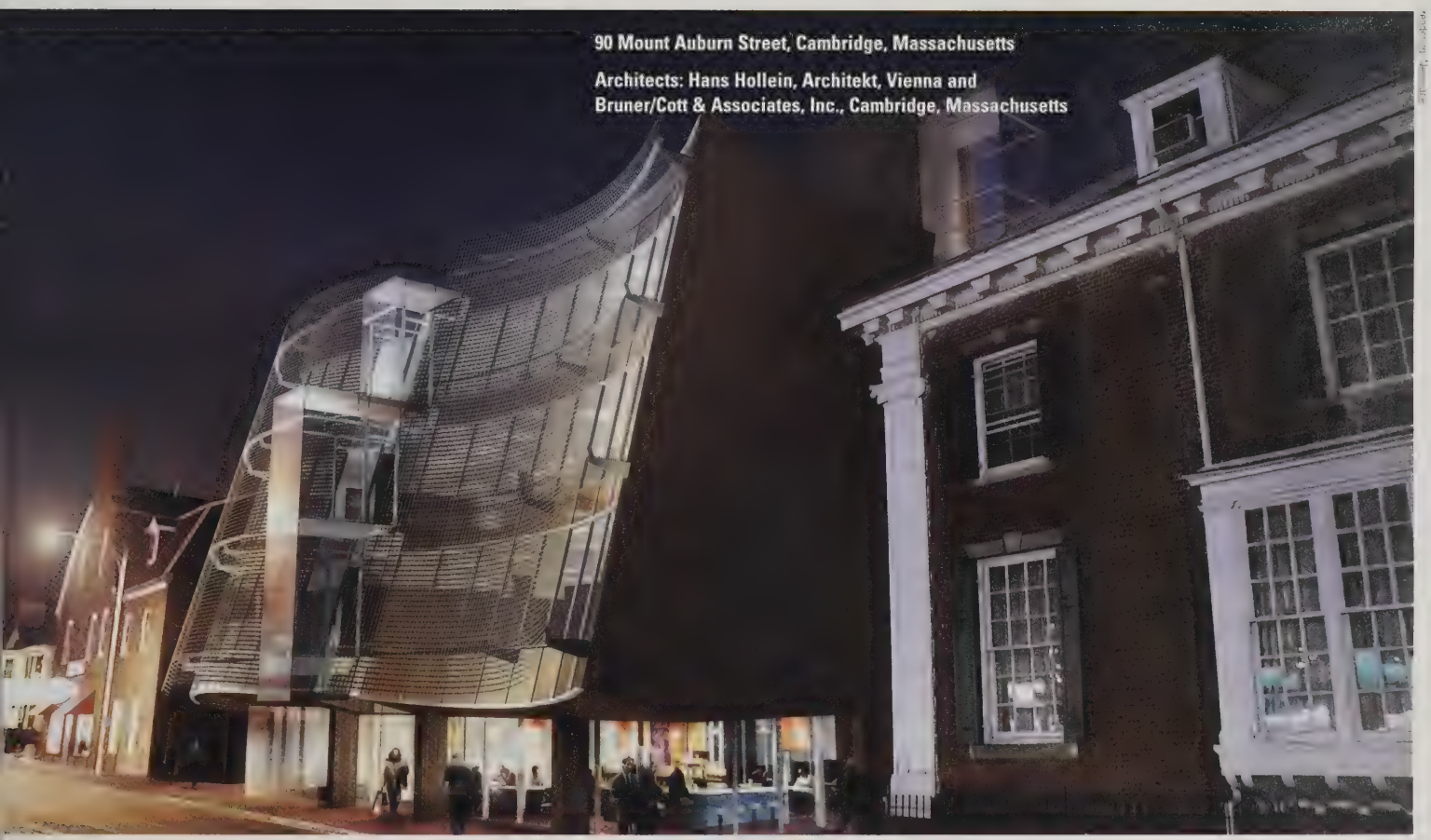
Tim Love: What Boston doesn't need is a Bilbao. Boston needs good background buildings that are of a quality that equals the good background buildings that the preservation movement is concerned with saving. The maybe-mythic buildings that you're talking about are the famous-men-and-events kind of buildings. Maybe the new ICA [Institute of Contemporary Art] will be one of those. Or the addition to the Museum of Fine Arts.

Pamela Hawkes: They happen to be sited in places that can take them.

Elizabeth Padjen: It's interesting to consider where we allow those kinds of experiments to occur: college campuses, museums, the cultural icons. [*Boston Globe* architecture critic] Bob Campbell made the point that the Hollein proposal was for an office building, that there was a mismatch between the energy of the façade and the fairly banal internal functions. If the proposed use had been something else, would we have thought of it differently?

Planners and designers moved toward the idea of working with an existing urban context and character. But I think the cycle is starting to shift again and the design professions are trying to move away from that kind of contextualism.

Charles Sullivan



90 Mount Auburn Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts
Architects: Hans Hollein, Architekt, Vienna and Bruner/Cott & Associates, Inc., Cambridge, Massachusetts

Charles Sullivan: Hollein is one of a number of European architects who seem to have moved away from contextualism in a very radical way. Harvard, under President Rudenstine, had the idea that Harvard should once again find cutting-edge architects to do radical and uncompromising buildings that would advance the state of the art. One of them is Machado and Silvetti's dormitory in Allston, which is under construction; Hollein's project was another one. It certainly was an extreme exercise, as anti-contextual as it could be. And it's the context, I think, that did it in, not the design. It was very hard to understand the impact of the building because the design caught your eye and distracted you from all the other issues. But once we figured out that this was a 65-foot building on a block where nothing else was more than 40 feet, in a series of six blocks all of which had low-rise, residential-scale buildings, we realized that this was literally a blockbuster because of its scale. That's why the Cambridge Historical Commission turned it down. I've told Harvard that a design that's in scale with its surroundings could be as extreme as Hollein's

and still be approved, because one of the commission's goals in Harvard Square is to support contemporary architecture when it's appropriate.

Albert Rex: Scale and mass make a huge difference, both in the preservation community and with the public, in how people accept buildings. You can do all kinds of things with materials if you respect the scale.

Tim Love: That building had a responsibility to the street that it wasn't respecting at all.

Peter Rose: Hollein was probably just the wrong choice for this project. This whole episode points to the fact that architecture is very hard to understand, whether you're a public activist, someone running a company, or someone on a municipal review board. We don't support architecture as a culture. We don't teach it to kids in schools. Our museums don't have architecture exhibitions.

There are all kinds of things that affect the decision-making process. One is the fear of making a mistake — and architecture sets you up big time for a big mistake, because you can know almost nothing from the drawings and the models unless you're fairly sophisticated, and laypeople usually find out how bad or brilliant it is after it's built and in use. And the other is the fear of the unknown. The reason that historicist buildings are so easy to sell is that they are familiar. This is not a culture that embraces the unknown. And there is no ingrained history of doing well by taking risks. So it's a very complex cultural, psychological, and educational problem, made worse by the fact that there is no public support of architecture here. The important public projects are always shunted into the private domain. A developer then builds these projects on a for-profit basis with the often modest requirement of providing some public amenity, such as housing or a park.

George Thrush: At some level, it grieves me to hear Charlie say that the commission has made the decision to endorse Modern architecture. Don't get me wrong; I'm glad of it. But it grieves me that the decision based simply on historical versus Modern rhetoric must be made at all. I saw a model of the Hollein proposal and I completely agree with your decision. But we should have had a better way of making qualitative judgments about it. I don't think that simply lowering the bulk would have solved the problem. The problem was architectural. It was not even a question of appearing more Modern than the neighbors. The building failed on more straightforward compositional terms.

Peter Rose: I agree that the notion that Modern buildings are going to be supported by the commission is an encouraging one. The downside is that it's actually even more difficult to understand what constitutes a good Modern building than it is to understand what constitutes a good restoration.

Tim Love: As a citizen, I would rather have a mediocre background building on those sites than a bad try at an exuberant Modern building.

Peter Rose: Maybe the issue is not Modern versus historicist but, rather, the degree to which a building should be part of the background or, on certain rare occasions, be more strident and be part of the foreground. There are some fabulous Modern buildings that know when to pull back and be an integral part of a larger ensemble.

Charles Sullivan: You can start with urban-design criteria. The story in Harvard Square goes on with the proposal we received recently for a site that's not far from the Hollein site. The proponent wanted to build an office building in the form of a perfect Second Empire, two-story house with a mansard roof, much more elaborately detailed than any Second Empire house you ever saw in Cambridge. It would put San Francisco to shame. Perfectly historically correct in a place where nothing like that ever appeared. The Historical Commission's reaction was, "Wouldn't this be easier if this were a contemporary design? Then we'd have something to say about it." But how do you criticize a perfect historicist exercise in 19th-century architecture? Once again, context is the most important factor.

George Thrush: The problem is that if we use historic authenticity as the only criterion for approval, this kind of Frankenstein becomes not only possible, but likely.

Tim Love: This raises a very interesting issue, though, because if it were inappropriate urbanistically, then you'd have a great case against it. We're doing a project at the University of Virginia, which is like working on Beacon Hill. And the best new buildings there are actually precise

We should not decide *either* to preserve something perfectly *or* to knock it down. It is part of the memory of a place, which, when erased, is gone forever. It is much better to try to weave the old with the new.

Peter Rose

reproductions of 1930s Georgian architecture. There's good contemporary architecture — a Todd Williams Billie Tsien building — and then there are some very good Hartman-Cox buildings that are right out of the 1932 playbook. The worst are the half-traditional Postmodern buildings, with their cheap mullions, cheap aluminum awnings, and cheap Aldo Rossi windows that look like they're drawn on with white Chartpak tape. They're the sleaziest-looking buildings there.

Albert Rex: We've been talking about new construction and its relationship to existing fabric, but I have to say that my job still focuses a lot on saving existing buildings — battles over demolition. What's going to go up once a building is demolished is one of the issues. But should it come down in the first place?

George Thrush: What are some of the criteria that you use to make a decision like that?

Albert Rex: One is to look at the context. If there are other examples of similar buildings, you can at least compare their individual value. Sometimes you don't have that context or it's changed. The Hillel house at Northeastern University was recently demolished to create greenspace for the campus. It was a pretty, Georgian-style building, and it represented the last piece of the former neighborhood. It was not landmark quality. But the neighbors felt very strongly about it. They felt it added context. The core of that debate was whether to save that building because it's the last representation of the neighborhood that had been there, or to demolish it to allow the site to be part of a whole new neighborhood.

Pamela Hawkes: The Landmarks Commission had a similar discussion about Connolly's, which had been a jazz club. We sat for two hours one night and heard people talk about their childhoods, going with their dads to hear jazz for the first time, performing there. It was incredibly emotional. But the existing building had no relation to that history. It's that kind of intangible quality that's very hard to deal with. The difficulty I see these days with preservation is that we've already dealt with all the easy projects — the buildings that are unquestionable landmarks, because of the context, their quality, their history. It's the tough ones that are left. And those buildings get caught up in a lot of other things that have more to do with people's sense of powerlessness — issues that architectural preservation can't resolve.

George Thrush: That's so true. Preservation has become a stand-in for politics, a way of addressing the economic forces at work. I live in Cambridgeport, where my sense is that most folks' ideal date is something like 1977. That's the moment at which many of my neighbors wish the world had stopped evolving, the time that best represents the community they bought into. I am familiar with the Hillel building at Northeastern — it was a nice building, but tearing it down was the right decision. That neighborhood had changed, and in any case it was never a very coherent one. Choosing not to save it shouldn't have been very difficult; especially considering the much more coherent vision that has replaced it. Preserving an existing neighborhood is much trickier. The neighbors resist change at the same time that they lack a voice in the larger interests of the city and metro area.

Pamela Hawkes: Someone once said that preservation is really about managing change. Not about forbidding it entirely, but letting it happen in ways that we can all feel comfortable with. And I think our comfort level with whatever scale of change is very much dependent on the scale of the building. If you have a two-story house and you change the door, people notice. But if you have a huge factory building, you can do something pretty radical, and the overall sense of that building remains the same.

George Thrush: But that still reflects a fear of change and the desirability of things remaining the same.

Albert Rex: Is preservation becoming a substitute for planning? Unfortunately, we have seen that happen in Boston.

Tim Love: Zoning in Boston has no teeth. Everything's nonconforming, everything's special. Maybe the problem from a policy standpoint is that zoning and preservation have been separated into two different policymaking approaches, when they're actually looking at the same issues. It proves that zoning is not a very effective vehicle in Boston for evaluating projects — because of the politics, but also because of the physical context itself. Boston is not a grid like Manhattan where an FAR [floor-area ratio] approach can almost guarantee a predictable massing. But because of the idiosyncrasy of the parcels in Boston, an FAR approach means that it is impossible to predict the success of a building's massing. Boston needs a new paradigm that combines preservation and urban design and a single set of guidelines.

171 Cedar Arts Center
Corning, New York

Architect: Ann Beha Architects
Boston

photo: David Lamb Photography

The difficulty these days with preservation is that we've already dealt with all the easy projects. It's the tough ones that are left. And those buildings get caught up in a lot of other things that have more to do with people's sense of powerlessness — issues that architectural preservation can't resolve.

Pamela Hawkes AIA

George Thrush: Visual guidelines would jibe better with historical contexts. What if, in addition to preservation and environmentalism, we had some word like "legibility" or "imageability"?

Tim Love: But that's already happened in the marketplace. Every new large project uses that kind of language — they all talk about creating a "real city," and providing a pedestrian scale.

Albert Rex: You can see the change in marketing materials. In the 1980s, they showed you brochures with pictures of the building. Now, if you go to Millennium Place, they'll show you pictures of the Common and Back Bay.

Peter Rose: I think the issue of scale points to one of the differences between European cities and American cities — that is the way the American business ethos percolates into architecture and planning. No CEO worth his or her salt can run a company without growing it by some percent a year, typically by making and selling more product, or acquiring other companies. The business culture is almost always focused on making things bigger. There's hardly a building in most major European cities, Rome for example, that hasn't been renovated multiple times, gutted even. They are rebuilt, generation by generation — nobody thinks that you need to knock them down. People love the way the streets work, the way the public domain works. But that model doesn't serve us, because we eagerly take buildings down, hoping to put much larger structures in their place.

Elizabeth Padjen: Let's talk about that. With the sudden influx of European designers practicing in our midst, there is a sense afoot that the European use of history is far more sophisticated than our own. Is that true? Does their experience transfer to this place? And can it transfer to large-scale American cities as well as to individual building?

George Thrush: There are some fundamental differences between Europe and the US. Their cities represent entire cultures, as much as any commercial purpose. I love all the conversations decrying the fact that in Germany or France the expenditures on the arts or on you-name-the-public-issue are 10 times what they are here. Yes, of course that's true. But to imagine that it's a management error that makes Berlin different from New York, or Atlanta different from Paris, misses the fact those cities are stewarded differently. Because it's understood that they represent a national culture.

Albert Rex: We're a country built on the concept of Manifest Destiny. We had lots of land, and we just kept moving out. We've always been a culture based on the idea of growing bigger.

Pamela Hawkes: Europeans have a legacy of reuse — they do something once, knowing that 30 years later they will do it again. We don't have their layers of history, and we haven't embraced their way of reusing things. Albert is right — our culture is much more about moving on to better pastures when we've used up the resources at home. And so we tear down rather than recycle.

Elizabeth Padjen: But I sense that we were once much more inventive about reusing old buildings than we are now. Look back to the 1960s when Carl Koch started turning old warehouses on the waterfront into housing. It was a brave thing. And I might be one of the last lonely defenders of Graham Gund's ICA building because I remember what it was in its time. It was extraordinary because it showed people what they could do with old buildings, and it was published everywhere. Sure, we all went to openings and got squeezed by that little corner in the atrium. But it was a landmark that made people think about possibilities. Similarly, I think Quincy Market could not be done today because of a much more conservative approach to the way we think about preservation. It was a time when the possibilities seemed greater. So what has happened? Should we blame the process, the layers of regulation? Or have we changed as a people?

Albert Rex: Cultures change. Our minds change. My office is in Old City Hall. Would we do a rehab like Old City Hall today, where they totally gutted the entire interior and added floors to make it work financially? We probably wouldn't be terribly supportive.

Elizabeth Padjen: And yet that's a great building.

Albert Rex: It is a great building. It's a great place to work.

Pamela Hawkes: It's probably only still there because the developers were allowed to do that.

George Thrush: And that goes back to the fact that we depend on the private sector to provide stewardship. When we look at European examples, we're looking at places where the government spends much more money on many, many buildings. But if architects in Boston went to Chicago half as many times as they do to Europe, they would at least balance their point of view. Because Chicago is a city that is among the most American of places. It tears things down and rebuilds. Chicagoans have a much more forward-looking attitude than Bostonians do. They've always viewed the best use of the Loop as the one that's coming. That doesn't mean they don't mess up from time to time. They do. But it offers an alternative model of a place in the United States that operates under the same economic and social framework, that shares the fact that we don't have the same cultural or aesthetic agenda that Paris and Berlin have.

Albert Rex: But cities like Chicago are much bigger than Boston. Boston does have more of a European sense; we share the sense of containment, of physical boundaries. We don't have city walls, but we have a river and a harbor. We had to create land in order to develop as a city.

George Thrush: But even if Boston isn't physically as big, it is comparable on other levels. Boston generates enormous financial energy. It produces the fourth largest metropolitan domestic product, after Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles.

Peter Rose: There is at least one thing that we can learn from Europe. The distinction between "preservation architects" and "contemporary architects" doesn't exist there. European architects do not even imagine that they're going to build a brand new building without considering the landscape, the weather, the context — they understand the notion that these things are all interconnected. They typically try to weave in old pieces to make something that's contemporary at the same time. We have these categories, these distinctions, which hurt us. We should not decide *either* to preserve something perfectly *or* to knock it down. It is part of the memory of a place, which, when erased, is gone forever. It is much better to try to weave the old with the new. It's the layers that make life richer and more interesting and more poetic.

Tim Love: I share the suspicion that the current architectural debate in Boston is starting to create an ideological divide between people who "design in brick" and people who don't — between contemporary architecture and architecture that is contextual. That's ultimately an unhealthy debate. Our firm has no problem designing in red brick if it's appropriate for the project. Even so, I find the level of debate and the architectural climate in Boston much more invigorating than elsewhere because so many issues are at stake. People deal with these issues seriously on an intellectual level. It's not like other places that

might let you do whatever you want. You have to persuade people, very intelligent people, to your viewpoint in a very complex setting. And everybody's very smart here — even the people who think that new buildings should look like old buildings. When you work on these things through an intellectual process, everybody ends up at a slightly different place from what you imagined when you started. So I've placed my bets on Boston. In the long run, say over the next 10 years, Boston is going to be a much more vital architectural community than New York or any other American city.

Peter Rose: You may be more hopeful than I am.

Tim Love: I'll admit that there is a problem in the architectural culture in Boston — which is the decision of some very good architects to drop out and not get their hands dirty, to work only within the culture of the *avant garde*. They aren't optimistic or maybe aren't confident that they can wade into the pool successfully. And so they find clients outside the city or teach or look for other ways to get recognition.

Peter Rose: But this is not a place that is easy to break into. Most developers work with firms that are in effect house architects. And let's face it, developers drive the market and they end up driving the architecture. The experience that stunned me more than anything in my travels was going to the most intact city in Europe, which is Venice, and seeing the work of Carlo Scarpa. Scarpa was conservative in his own way, but seeing those buildings, which did not look a bit like anything against which they were placed, was extraordinary. You didn't need to know how to read them to know intuitively that they were fabulous. But we can't mandate that kind of work. It happens only by nurturing architecture and supporting architects who are serious, good designers.

Tim Love: Scarpa is a reminder that the best relationship between old and new is a subtle one, the quiet voice. The Austrian architect Hermann Czech, whom I worked for, is another such voice, a highly respected architect before Coop Himmelbau took over Vienna. He has done very contemporary work that subtly draws from Adolf Loos and Otto Wagner. Alvaro Siza in Portugal in another. They are all examples of contemporary architects who take the context and history and culture of a place very seriously. I don't think that American culture can support architecture like that. Except maybe in Boston. It's the only place. ■■■

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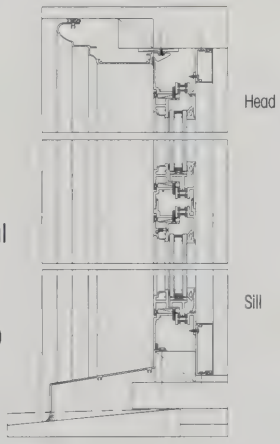

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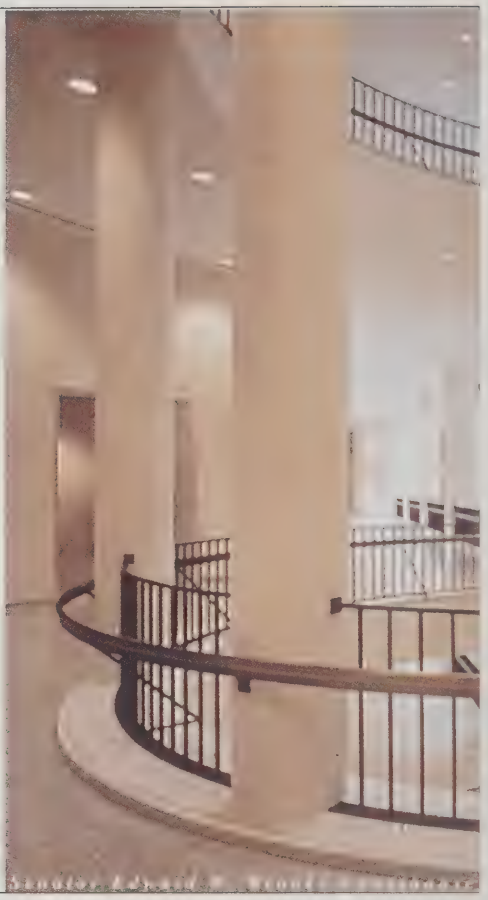

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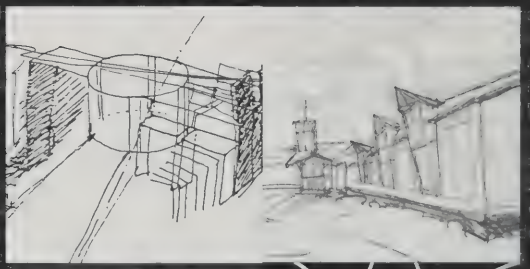

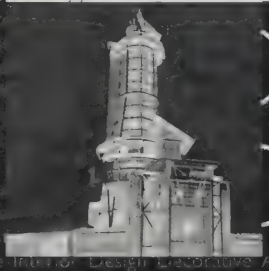

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Drawing from Piranesi:
Age, History, and the Narcotic of Nostalgia

by Wellington Reiter AIA

Maybe it is the word: preservation. It sounds like a worthy cause without a downside. Yet I would guess that nine out of ten architects instinctively tune out any conversation on the topic just as they would a lecture on standard accounting practices. They're all for it, but the work seems best left to a different personality type. Preservation, by its very definition, is passive, an approach to the built environment that is peripheral to the concerns of most designers.

Preservation and design. Past and future. Maintenance and invention. Many architects view preservation as a measured and deliberate enterprise dedicated to the past, and design as some sort of heroic attempt to see into the future. It's a flawed analysis, but it may explain why preservation — even though it addresses the essential dignity of the building enterprise — comes up in discussion in schools of architecture even less frequently than the topic of vapor barriers. The value of preserving the past is an easy sell in theory but hard to define as other than a technical project at both the academic and professional levels.

Yet everyone associated with place-making is sympathetic to the preservationist argument. The gravity with which stone was once laid upon stone or with which wood was painstakingly crafted for both structure and ornament satisfies in a way that the thinness of the contemporary idiom never will. What architect doesn't look at the sidewalks of old Main Street or a beautifully detailed brick warehouse and envision a vibrant urban landscape brimming with life? What urban designer doesn't instinctively conduct an inventory of historical structures upon arrival in an unfamiliar city, believing that these are somehow the vital signs of community? But when the idea of preservation is applied to a specific structure, the argument can be so narrowly focused that it is dismissed by the very constituency that should find it most appealing.

Accordingly, what should be a cohesive building community splinters into factions such as the "preservation community" and the "design community" whenever high-profile projects emerge that seem to demand a "you are with us or against us" kind of pledge. A prime example in the city of Boston is the debate surrounding the Old Northern Avenue Bridge. When well-meaning bridge preservationists lead with the motto, "A society is measured by the way it treats its oldest members," it is clear that allegiance to the cause, and not open discussion about the consequences or alternative

strategies, is demanded on the part of the faithful. However, a litmus test on a matter not easily reduced to sloganeering has the unintended consequence of alienating many of the very professionals and educators who care most about bridges, buildings, cities, and civic life. Preservation can, at times, appear to be a cause unto itself. But if each campaign to save a structure is fought with the "slippery slope" argument, there is no room for a broader contextual analysis. In the case of the Old Northern Avenue Bridge, keeping the structure has great merit, but it also precludes some extraordinary options that, absent the bridge, could contribute to an even more potent vision of a grand civic realm in an area that is likely to become the heart of the city in the 21st century.

This is precisely the kind of question that seems to provoke the greatest conflict between those apparently driven by nostalgia and those charged with building for the future. The preservation of landmark structures, a laudable goal worthy of support by all, has a potential side-effect: a desire for the surrounding city to assume an historicist character in order to be sympathetic to the original structures. In the cases of American cities with distinct architectural heritages — Boston, New Orleans, San Francisco — the worthy impulse to pre serve a legacy can slide into a Disneyesque marketing campaign. How else does one explain the decision to finish off one of the great achievements of 21st-century engineering and an unparalleled civic design opportunity — the depression of the Central Artery in Boston— with stage-set urbanism featuring brick sidewalks and double-acorn street lamps? The root of such manufactured history could be the well-intentioned desire to conserve and reinforce the modest ancestral legacy that our relatively youthful nation enjoys. It's not a bad impulse, if applied in moderation. However, preservation is not the same as urbanism, nor is it urban design. Used as such, preservation can become a kind of over-prescribed depressant that perpetuates its own addictive qualities because the present, never given full voice, is doomed to mediocrity.

Anyone with even a peripheral interest in architectural history is familiar with the work of the great documenter of ancient Rome, Giovanni Battista Piranesi. Without question, Piranesi's entire worldview was shaped by a nearly religious zeal for the past. His archeological investigations and spectacular renderings of the monuments of the city, recently on view at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, raised the status of the Roman builders to mythical proportions. And yet Piranesi never depicted a building as either physically or conceptually fixed, nor did he condone such a view. In his drawings, everything from a block of stone to a city plan is perpetually in a state of "becoming." His reverence for the past translated into a belief that history is alive, not in need of preservation, but instead to be used as the raw material for new works and ideas. Piranesi believed that only projects of the most exalted status were worthy of preservation — just enough breadcrumbs to mark the path through history, but with plenty of space left in between to be explored by future generations.

Comparable to Piranesi is a 1928 essay, "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin," by the historian Alois Riegl. Riegl acknowledges the "historical value" of certain structures and both the desire and need to keep them fully intact, if possible, as if time had been suspended. But he also suggests that the picture is considerably more complex if one responds to the concept of "age value," of which "historical value" is but a part. Age-value pertains to the universal appeal of nature and its registration, particularly on the surface of man-made structures. The essential qualities of age-value were brought home to an American audience by J.B. Jackson, in his classic text *The Necessity for Ruins*. Riegl states, "From the standpoint of age-value, one need not worry about the eternal preservation of monuments, but rather one should be concerned with the constant representation of the cycle of creation, and this purpose is fulfilled even when future monuments have supplanted those of today." In other words, change in all its guises should be acknowledged as essential to the maturation of cities. Like Piranesi, Riegl favored a complex reading of the built environment that included an appeal both to the intellect (historical value) and to emotion (age-value), even if the latter "contributes to its own demise." Strong medicine for strict preservationists. But what, after all, is the goal of preservation? Bricks and mortar — or the "representation of the cycle of creation" that Riegl speaks of? And how much of the former does one need to produce the latter?

These are, of course, the grand questions that planners of all persuasions confront daily. Unfortunately, history has shown us that both preservationists and designers are susceptible to inflated claims of virtue and foresight. Yet as we draw various maps to the future, we will need them both, assuming that neither enters into the debate with the unyielding conviction of being on the side of the greater good. Preservation has the enviable position of arguing for that which is known and of certifiable quality. Design, on the other hand, is a calculated risk. But success for each is measured by the same yardstick — the quality and complexity of life that is supported by the resulting environment. In the end, what matters is not the number of bread crumbs that are left on the trail, but that the path forward is legible, compelling, and provocative as we retrace it time and time again. ■■■

Wellington Reiter AIA is a principal of Urban Instruments in Boston and an associate professor at MIT. He recently delivered a series of lectures on Piranesi at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

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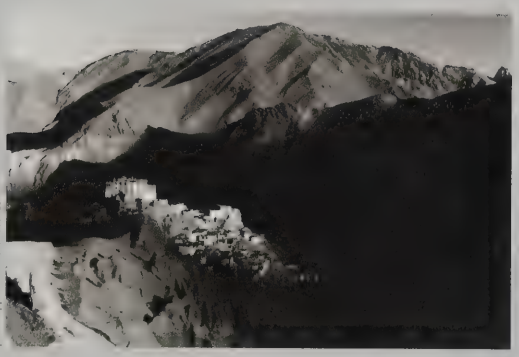
Preserving the Spirit: Photographs by Kenro Izu

by Elizabeth Padjen FAIA



photos pp. 25-31: © Kenro Izu

The photographs of Kenro Izu offer the viewer a remarkable experience. At first glance, they appear to be old 19th-century expedition photos, the sort taken by intrepid British explorers traveling the empire with a teapot tucked in with the camera. It is the second glance that will captivate you.

Izu's images capture some of the world's most sacred places — temples, pyramids, ancient monasteries — by capturing their transcendent spirit. Many of these structures are in a state of deterioration, but it is impossible to imagine restoring them to their original condition. Painted up, bright and shiny, they could never have the eloquence they do now, as their stonework becomes part of the landscape.

Kenro Izu was born in Japan in 1949 and settled in New York City in the early 1970s. Over the last two decades, he has documented the world's spiritual architecture under exacting conditions. He works with a 300-pound camera, producing 14 x 20 inch negatives, which he prints on hand-coated papers using the platinum palladium process, each taking three days to print. A three-week trip typically produces only 20 to 35 negatives.

But the physical aspects of creating these photograhs may not be as demanding as the process of capturing the image itself, of the spiritual resonance between the photographer and the place. As Izu himself has described it:

"I try to face a monument, blank my thinking, and see if it vibrates to my heart. I am documenting the site. The only thing I choose is when and where I document it. I can sense it — the place and the moment. That is what matters. If I don't feel it, I don't take the picture, because it's completely meaningless.... I try to use my basic instincts, like an animal sensing danger. I want to be as pure, as empty as possible and just try to document the spirituality of the place."

The first comprehensive museum exhibition devoted to the work of this extraordinary photographer is on view at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, through March 17, 2002.

Elizabeth Padjen FAIA is the editor of *ArchitectureBoston.* She is an overseer of the Peabody Essex Muesum in Salem.

Mustang #6, Nepal 1998

Angkor #71, Ta Prohm, Cambodia 1994

Mandalay #78, Mingun Pagoda, Burma 1995

Palmyra #34, Ta Prohm, Syria 1995

Ladakh #49, Ramayuru Gompa, India

Editor's note:
For more information, including additional images, a text interview, and video trailers, go to: www.pem.org. A catalogue, *Kenro Izu: Sacred Places*, with text by exhibition curator Clark Worswick, is available from Arena Editions. ■■■

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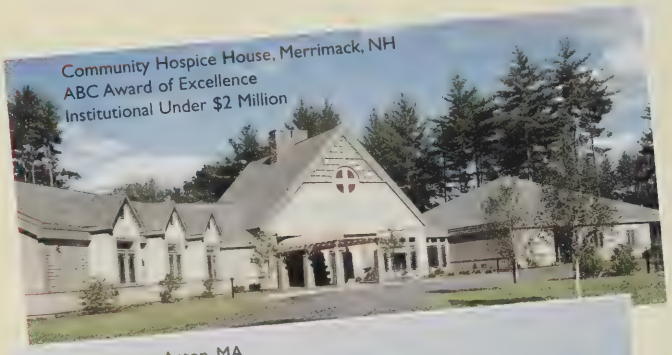

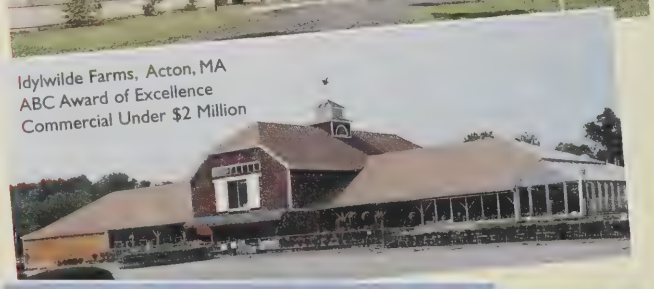

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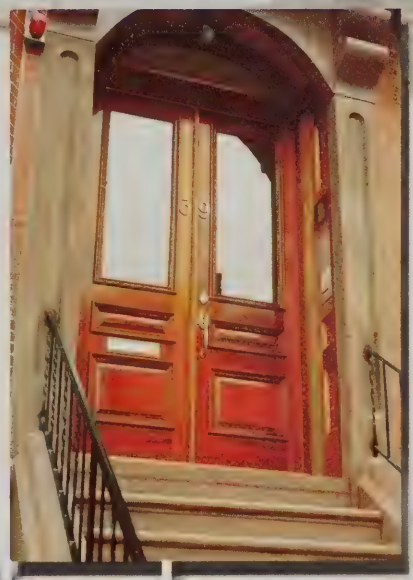

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The Modern House in New England

by David Fixler AIA

1

photo: Henry Moss

2

Over the course of the last decade, there has been growing interest in the culture and architecture of mid-century Modernism. This interest often manifests itself as nostalgia for an era of enthusiasm about the future and a modern way of life. But lately, it has also come to represent, at least in respect to the Modern house, a longing for a return to a clean, simple, and often more environmentally friendly mode of living. Fortunately, this growth in awareness is also spawning an interest in the preservation of these houses, and a consequent re-evaluation of the philosophy that influences the technical and aesthetic approaches to their preservation.

An impressive collection of these houses can be found in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and its suburban cultural hinterland; together, they represent an evolutionary phase in the regional adaptation of inter-war High Modernism. They were commissioned and designed by a group of people who understood and believed in progress and in the potential of research and technology to elevate the human condition. Many of the clients

for these houses were the academics and professionals largely responsible for the birth and flowering of the post-industrial information revolution, and there is growing historical evidence that the Modern house was both a symbol and a key component of the lifestyle aspirations of many in this group.

Both the architects and the patrons of these houses believed that their designs constituted an appropriate response to the question of how to lead a contemporary life — a life fully cognizant and respectful of the unique history, character and environment of New England — without denying the proper place of their homes as a reflection of the United States at mid-century. The first of these houses were not, as previously assumed, simply a reaction to the coming of Walter Gropius to Harvard in 1937; in fact, the decision of Gropius and the Storrow family (his patron) to build his house in Lincoln was probably reinforced by the existence of a culture in the western suburbs of Boston that was receptive to these ideas. The first Modern house in New England had already been designed and built in Belmont by Eleanor Raymond in 1932, and in 1934, Edwin (Ned) Goodell, an MIT-trained architect recently converted to the cause of European Modernism, designed a house for a law professor and an art historian in neighboring Weston (a recent preservation *cause célèbre*). Even in Lincoln itself, architect Henry Hoover had built his own Modern house around 1934, the first of some 60 highly site-sensitive houses that he would author in the region over the next 50 years.

3

photo: David Fixler

The period of World War II saw both the creation of a significant demand for housing and the solidification of the cultural changes necessary to create the desire for a modern way of life. In 1940, Carl Koch began the Snake Hill development of Modern homes in Belmont, and by 1948, the young partners of The Architects Collaborative (TAC) developed residences for themselves and a few friends at Six Moon Hill in Lexington, one of the most significant planned neighborhoods of the Modern Movement in the US. Espousing Bauhaus rhetoric softened to reflect the new realities of building in a progressive and prosperous corner of the world, this community represents a successful augmentation of the American pastoral ideal with some common amenities and a common governing purpose that continues to serve as a model for high-quality, low-density suburban development.

Why attach this significance to the single-family house? American social and architectural theorists, from Jefferson to Wright, have repeatedly championed the idea of community based upon the single-family homestead rooted in the land, a very different notion from that commonly accepted in post-Enlightenment Europe. Therefore, while many of the iconic symbols of Modernism in Europe are social housing projects such as the *Siedlungen* of Frankfurt and Stuttgart, some of its most important manifestations in this country are to be found in the suburban single-family house.

Much has been written, starting with Siegfried Giedion in the 1940s, about the Modern house in the Northeast as a regionalist response to the principles and the iconic forms of European Modernism. But it is misleading to assume that these architects were seeking merely to develop a contemporary interpretation of the traditional New England saltbox. In a profound cultural shift, nature, traditionally regarded as an adversary in our harsh northern climate, was now something that could be embraced as a result of the tempering effects of modern building technology. The seductive notion of "the machine in the garden"— that is, an artifact co-existing with but independent of nature — reached its residential apotheosis with Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House of 1948-51; in New England it became softened and delicately attuned to the local environment. Even Philip

1
Field House, 1934
Weston, Massachusetts
Architect:
Edwin (Ned) Goodell

Addition, 1978
Architect:
Stanford Anderson

2
Taft-Yale residence, 1949
Six Moon Hill
Lexington, Massachusetts
Architect:
TAC

Renovations and additions, 1988, 1998, 1999
Architect:
Hickox Williams Architects

3
Solar House, 1938
Lincoln, Massachusetts
Architect:
Henry Hoover

Johnson's canonical Glass House of 1949 (clearly the result of a careful study of Mies) was a step in this direction, with its stout brick hearth and plinth rooted firmly in the American earth. However, the early houses of Marcel Breuer (who co-authored the Gropius House) offer even stronger examples, with their use of natural fieldstone, vertical board siding, and the occasional low-sloped pitched roof. New England began the conscious embrace of the alternative, regionally sensitive Modernism that began with architects such as Alvar Aalto in Europe and William Wurster in California before the war.

photo: © Ezra Stoller/ESTO

4

The layout and material palette of these houses showcased a relaxed efficiency, an integral accommodation of contemporary technology, an appreciation of transparency to foster a sympathetic dialogue with nature, and the visual and tactile qualities of natural materials. They were site-specific, carefully oriented to sun and topography, and generally disturbed little of their surroundings — their informality welcoming a more natural and less manicured setting. Far from being cold, hard-edged temples of glass and steel, most of the Modern houses in New England are still warm and wonderful places to live. The best tend to be at once spacious and intimate, and even the most luxurious understate their elegance, without ever indulging in the soulless excess so unfortunately evident in the ubiquitous "mansions" of the new suburban landscape. In addition, their open-plan layouts anticipated many of the requisite amenities of today's houses, making them easily adaptable for 21st-century use.

This flexibility and ease of adaptation renders the Modern house a prime candidate for preservation and adaptive re-use. The houses of Six Moon Hill admirably showcase this flexibility. Each of the original houses has been enlarged and renovated at least once, sometimes substantially increasing the original size. In all cases however, the character of the original spatial relations and material ideas continue to glow through the alterations, and the houses remain as unmistakably Modern today as they were in 1948. Intelligent preservation should always foster a holistic vision that is based upon enhancing the character-defining features of the structure rather than focusing upon slavish restoration or replication of original materials and details. In addressing the architecture of the Modern Movement in particular, preservation should foster fidelity to the treatment of the social, technical and aesthetic idea embodied in the work as much as (if not more than) to the physical fabric of a building. The Modern Movement, after all, was never intended to be a style. It was a way of building — a way that still has relevance today. ■■■

photo: David Fixler

5

4
Chamberlain House, 1940
Wayland, Massachusetts
Architect:
Marcel Breuer with Walter Gropius

5
House at Six Moon Hill, 1949
Lexington, Massachusetts
Architect:
TAC

David Fixler AIA is a principal at Einhorn Yaffee Prescott Architecture and Engineering/PC in Boston. A director of the New England chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians, he is an active member of DOCOMOMO International (Documentation and Conservation of the Modern Movement) as a member of its Special Committee for Registers and as a co-founder of DOCOMOMO/US — New England.

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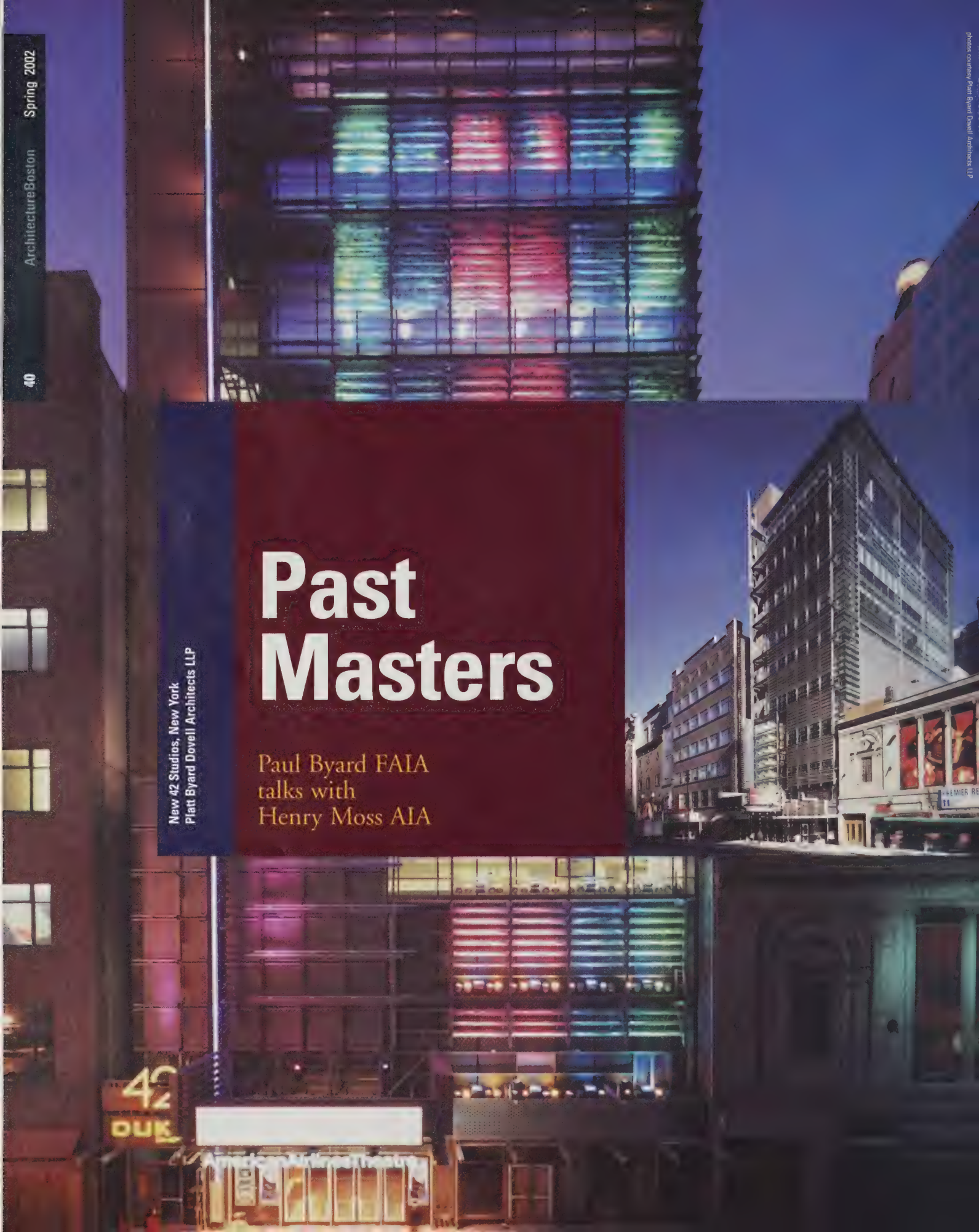

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Past Masters

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Paul Byard FAIA
talks with
Henry Moss AIA

Paul Spencer Byard, Esq., FAIA is the director of the historic preservation program at the Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture Planning and Preservation, where he has been an adjunct associate professor of architecture since 1974. A principal of Platt Byard Dovell in New York City, he is also an attorney and was associate counsel of the New York State Urban Development Corporation form 1969-1974. A partner of James Stewart Polshek prior to the formation of Platt Byard Dovell, he is the author of *The Architecture of Additions: Design and Regulation* (W.W. Norton, 1998).

Henry Moss AIA is a principal of Bruner/Cott & Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he specializes in the adaptive reuse and restoration of historic structures. His firm's recent projects include MASS MoCA in North Adams, Massachusetts, and the renovations of University Hall, Memorial Hall, and Peabody Terrace at Harvard University. He is a co-chair of the BSA Historic Resources Committee.

Moss: You are the director of the historic preservation program at Columbia University and a partner of Platt Byard Dovell, which has recently won a number of awards for the 42nd Street Studios, a wonderful, cutting-edge building in Times Square. Some people might view those roles as contradictory. What is your sense of the increasing polarization that we see between architects for old buildings and architects for new buildings?

Byard: To me the future of preservation depends on one thing: embracing architecture. Architecture is a terrific art, one of the chief public supports we have for understanding and living our lives. That's what old buildings offer us, their understandings of their times and their illustrations of our differences. It's the reason we have the legal right to protect old buildings. But under all the other agendas that are hung on preservation, architecture is often squeezed out, indeed a terror of architecture takes hold, to a degree that could kill the golden goose. When protesters dance around saying, "You have to be so careful about the old buildings," they're actually demeaning the old buildings. Most of them have plenty of gumption to stand up to and be part of the human condition, and they don't have to be set apart, out of the real to contribute in combination with new works of architecture.

Moss: I believe in that robustness, too. I came down on the train. It was a very beautiful ride, part dawn and part fog, and I looked again through your book, *The Architecture of Additions*. The clarity of your case studies kept colliding with what I saw out the window. The heterogeneity, the collisions, the stylistic overlays of real life seemed to make a mockery of our discussions of various kinds of purity and deference.

Byard: That of course is the accident of real life. But what we do as architects working with old buildings is, ideally, directed at that complexity. What matters most is not what the building looks like, but what it *means* — what it tells you, what you can learn from it. Then you build upon that meaning to make the new building, so there's an inherent coherence between two things that may look entirely different. But the point is that they are dealing with the same issue; in the apparent incongruity, there's a profound harmony.

Moss: I recently looked back at *Collage City*, by Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, which talks about that kind of incongruity. One of the wonderful ideas they discussed was in the phrase, "managing iconoclasm." And it occurred to me that one of the valuable aspects of the phenomenon of "signature architects" is that the public trusts that the star architects can manage the iconoclastic component of the city; the public doesn't have that same trust in an unknown or local architect.

Byard: Rowe and Koetter were writing in the '70s, just when people were beginning to throw stones at the prevailing iconic view of Modernism. It came at the beginning of a great social failure of nerve that took away our public purposes and left us as a relatively aimless crowd of individuals with a few lucky ones singled out for celebrity. The celebrity architect today enjoys a certain freedom; the ordinary worker in the vineyard, *i.e.* Moss or Byard, has a much tougher time because we don't have the same

free pass. Aldo Rossi was a great architect, but one could say that the Aldo Rossi building on Broadway in New York is deeply undistinguished. Among other things, it is backward: the façade that belongs on Broadway is on Mercer Street, and the façade that is on Broadway is clunky and heavy-handed. But the fact is that it's Mr. Rossi's work and that makes it fine. I don't mean to overemphasize that, but it is a symptom of our times. A celebrity is above question and — happy person! — above abuse.

Moss: You have used a phrase in talking about the early '70s that I've always liked: "the shock and waste of demolition." That was the matrix from which so much of the preservation movement evolved. But it didn't take long for people to use preservation in a different way, to try to protect what they felt was familiar and pleasant about their everyday surroundings. And now nobody knows how to put one thing next to another, because nobody knows how to address jumps in height, scale, bulk, or use.

Byard: Exactly. So what we have done is to say, "Oh goodness, we won't deal with *that*." We've chickened out of the process of reconciling problems of quantity. We've basically eliminated height and bulk as components of architectural form and said they're off the table when dealing with old buildings: "We'll tell you what the bulk and height should be, then you can decorate the surface." But we can't just ignore the contemporary condition. Of course, we can try — we live in a time that is devoted to righteousness and denial, and much popular preservation is deep into righteousness and denial. But we have to find a way to lift ourselves out of that.

The 1970s were extraordinarily important for just that reason — people talked about managing the problem of change. Preservation was born as part of a self-reforming Modernism, which said, "Look, we messed up last time, now we have to get these things to work together." But we've lost that reforming thread. There's a kind of dead hand at work at the moment that obscures what architecture does for us. Architecture doesn't just make things prettier. It tells us things about the human condition that we need to come to terms with.

Moss: One difference today is the presence of a public design control infrastructure. Do you sense that the agencies that are involved with design control now are becoming a little more defensive? They often seem very confused when they have to deal with anything that's not two-dimensional.

Byard: That's a serious problem. There is too rarely an understanding of architecture as a three-dimensional, formal art that is supposed to produce things that you've never seen before. They have great difficulty dealing with anything that isn't a picture.

Moss: And it hinders their ability to deal with new challenges, perhaps most obviously the preservation of Modern buildings. People are saying, "We don't really understand those Modern buildings because we grew up learning why they were destructive." They want to know if there is something they should read. But the character-defining elements in a lot of those buildings are spatial and have to do with transparency — all elements falling outside the vocabulary of orthodox preservation.

Byard: One of the things I've tried to do at Columbia is to get students to understand those buildings. You bring them to a Modern building, and because they have been taught to hate it, they're turned off. But after an hour or two, they say, "You know, that's terrific!" And that conversion is one of the great moments in contemporary pedagogy, because they were brought up to think that reform, social progress, and public action were all fundamentally bad things, and they suddenly realize what they've lost.

What I'd love to do next is a book about architecture and social policy, which would examine the buildings of the 20th century as expressions not of architectural history but of the history of the revelation in architecture of social policy. We need to be more broadly informed. You can't preserve a building simply because you think it's beautiful; you preserve it because of what you learn from it. For example, you would save Peter Eisenman's Wexner Center, impossible as it is, because it represents a moment in the history of the 20th century where there was a flight from usefulness, a loss of confidence in our ability to solve human problems, and an amazing willingness to demonstrate

Chandigarh assembly buildings
Punjab, India
Architect: Le Corbusier with
Jenneret, Drew and Fry (1957-65)

that by building an impossible building. So we would save it for its place in our intellectual history, as a demonstration of the pickle we got ourselves into.

Moss: How does that thinking fit into your agenda for the program at Columbia?

Byard: I am very keen to represent current concerns in old contexts. Columbia — indeed, all preservation — has suffered from a tremendous division that goes back to the origins of preservation when the founders — James Marston Fitch and others who were all architects — were reacting against orthodox Modernism. They were reformists and they rejected that kind of established architecture. And that division has continued. A big part of my agenda has been to put them back together. One example is our Chandigarh Studio — we invented a joint design studio for the third-year advanced architectural design students and the second-year preservationists. It gave the designers an opportunity to work with additions to old buildings, and it gave the preservationists the opportunity to participate in the process of design. Each had to understand the meaning of the old building and how the new design supports the old. No one could say no to anything. The judgments had to grow out of the process. I have to say the results were terrific. The architects understood finally that everything they were doing was an argument. The preservationists had to find a way of explaining the meaning of Chandigarh and the meaning of the addition and of judging them together. And we tried to get everybody to understand the importance of metaphor as the chief verbal device for explaining, for moving from facts to understanding. If I succeed in this modest revolution, everyone will be able to understand and work with the meaning of existing architecture.

Moss: I don't think that question ever arose when I was a student, except in tangential ways. When you look at nomination forms for historic buildings, the one question that people have the most trouble responding to is the one about "significance." They just don't know what to do with that.

Byard: You're so right. We're very good at writing history, but then the hard question is, What do you get from the building itself? If you can write a book about it, you don't need the building. Tell me what you can read only in the building. Let's take Chandigarh, for example. Le Corbusier designs the new capital city for the Punjab in the 1950s, right at the foot of the Himalayas, to represent the future of India. He stakes out a

colossal, seemingly infinite, ground plane — the Modernist dream — and on it he places buildings like completely strange but very beautiful concrete lumps. They're all concrete — there's no glass. They're all about resistance — they're standing up to the universe and, more particularly, they're standing up to the Bomb. And how are they doing it? Well, they're organized around Corbusier's Le Modulor — essentially a system based on the proportions of a guy. And the guy is this long, healthy Swiss who's supposed to be the universal man, and the new Indian man and the buildings are all organized around him — it's an extraordinary representation of an existential view of modern man after the war, under the shadow of the Bomb. It comes straight from 1950. You've got Corbusier with a cigarette. You've got James Dean with a cigarette. You've got Camus with a cigarette.

Moss: And no one with an Internet.

Byard: And no one with an Internet. These are buildings that are trying to be existentially brave. The point is to help everyone get to the point where they can see this. For the architects, the opportunity to deal with the problem of the old buildings brought them back down from a very remote world of ideas, where everything is possible, to one where there are connections to be made, and where they will be judged by the quality of those connections. The Chandigarh capitol today is an undervalued resource, beloved but doing far less than it could. The buildings are powerful things, useful things. They don't need to be coddled. They need to be exploited, given a chance to do what they can do — the trick being to do so without impairing the extraordinary power of their meaning. I guess that's part of my current hobby horse.

Moss: I used to work for Sir Bernard Feilden, who said that architects should not begin to work with historic buildings until they are already accomplished architects. So I think it's probably very healthy that you've got people who are at a fairly advanced level in school starting over again, so to speak. Bernard's point was that you need to learn not to imitate, but to be able to make value judgments within stylistic systems.

Byard: That's right. My firm just finished the renovation of the national landmark Cooper Union Foundation Building, which is a purely technical restoration, but a good example of your point. The central problem of that building was the expression of the ashlar brownstone. Brownstone is a maligned material; architects today say Cooper and Peterson didn't know what they were doing with it. But they knew exactly what they were doing. It was very flat, and it gave you a surface that was really like drawing on paper — an expression that was relevant to what they were trying to say. And just as you said, we tried to understand the meaning of the stone in 1858, not because there's something precious about it, but because it was the point of the building. We wanted to get that flatness, but we couldn't, given the abuse of the stone in the interim. So we worked out an equivalent, evocative condition, smooth-ish and old, by hand-tooling the entire building. You can't achieve precisely what they were trying to achieve, nor should you try to, but you do have to make the building make sense again. We're here, today, and we have a different set of problems. So then the question becomes, How can my understanding of this old building contribute to what we need to understand today? And that's where the joy comes, even in a technical restoration.

Moss: I wonder if you are deliberately avoiding the word "intention." I see design intent as something quite different from the meaning of a building.

Byard: That's very important. I don't give a damn what Le Corbusier thought he was doing. What matters is what he *did*. And that's the difference between intent and meaning. What does the building say? And that's another jump for everyone working with old buildings. Students keep trying to get architects to tell them what their designs mean. I tell them that the architects don't know any better than they do. When Aaron Copland delivered the Norton lectures at Harvard in the '50s, he asked, "Who am I writing for?" And he answered, "I'm writing for the gifted listener." As architects and preservationists, we're supposing an audience of "gifted listeners." And of course we must first be gifted listeners ourselves.

Foundation Building, Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, New York
Renovation by Platt Byard Dovell Architects LLP

Moss: Then how do you answer the criticism of preservation from people who say, "Well, this is just elitist nonsense"? I admit that it's never been clear to me why working with old buildings is more elitist than creating something new.

Byard: Preservation has been burned by the political baggage that has been attached to it. After the collapse of the public sector in the 1970s, gentrification and the degree to which preservation benefitted the middle and upper-middle class brought with them the notion that preservation is elitist. But that's all the more reason for saying we need to get at the meanings of the buildings. Why would we want to save this building? Tarring preservation with elitism is just as bad as tarring Modernism with destruction. They're bad polemics.

Moss: It's flawed analysis.

Byard: Exactly. The core activity is still valuable. You're saving energy, you're saving materials, you're saving space. You've saving identity. You're doing all sorts of wonderful things that have nothing to do with elitism.

Moss: You started your career as a lawyer and participated in the arguments on which a lot of preservation regulation was based. Only later did you begin to practice architecture. Is anybody from the early years calling you an apostate? Has there been an evolution here which you're aware of?

Byard: No. I think I'm in the happy position of being a latecomer, moving from the law to architecture. It's a bit like being a convert to a religion; you become more zealous than the originals. My critical transitional moment was with Ed Logue at the Urban Development Corporation, where we were part of the last wave of self-reforming Modernism. Nixon turned off the subsidies in 1974, and that was the end. But I was brought to this through that extraordinary experience with Logue, who was an amazing man; we were all embarked on a process of continuing reform. And preservation was a piece of it. But 1974 was the beginning of the end of public interest and public investment. I left the UDC that year, when we knew the handwriting was on the wall, and I said to myself, "What the hell do you do now? Do you go back to Wall Street and close mortgages and take care of balance sheets? Or do you go to architecture school?" So I kept on practicing law to pay for it, and went to architecture school. I see my path as one of continuity.

Moss: One of my responses to reading the *Architecture of Additions* is to think back over various landmarks commission discussions and realize how clumsy the arguments have been, perhaps, in fairness, because they grew out of embattled situations. I wish that the commissions themselves were reading this book. It's very clearly argued, but there's a lot of passion — it has a very optimistic view. But I don't believe that people in the street think in these terms; I still don't think they care very much about history. They are more apt to think, "I know this building, I've walked past it 400,000 times, my mother once worked there, and I hate to imagine what's going to be there instead."

MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts
Bruner/Cott & Associates, Inc.

Photos: Peter Vanderwarker

Byard: Yes. We've talked about the meaning of buildings, but the other level of meaning is tied to place-making, where it becomes a constituent of identity. We all build our identities around physical places. It's an environmental issue. It's visceral. But it's something we don't quite know how to deal with. The landmarks law at the moment doesn't address it. The law is still focused on historic preservation.

Moss: Which in many cases forces people to attach values to buildings that the architecture and true history don't support. Because what they really want to do is stop the construction of anything larger.

Byard: Exactly. It's become a tool for prevention. Geoffrey Platt, the first chairman of the New York Landmarks Commission, said that the landmarks law exists to manage change, not to prevent it. And that's what we were doing in the 1970s. But we are now in a more authoritarian era, and facts have become the source of control. For example, Bob Stern, who is really an extraordinary person, has promoted the preservation of 2 Columbus Circle — the former Huntington Hartford museum — because it was designed by Edward Durell Stone. In effect he's saying, "I know that Edward Durell Stone is important, therefore you should save the building." It's an authoritarian view based on superior knowledge. I would love to get away from that. I want everyone to see preservation as a design discipline. You don't have to have superior knowledge. But that's typical of our time.

Moss: It is to a certain degree because we've developed a system whereby preservation staffs rely on survey reports to defend embattled buildings.

Byard: And we need that.

Moss: On the other hand, the people who are making the decisions are politicized. And they're under tremendous pressure from the proponents as well as from local people who say, for example, "We don't want this on the waterfront — we want a tranquil waterfront."

Byard: But if you had a public policy that said it should remain tranquil, you would find that it could be tranquil in a lot of different ways. And that would become apparent if we get back to architecture that deals with form, if, for example, we let height back in as a regular old architectural problem to be managed by careful massing and by the understanding of slenderness as a valuable tool. We say something is too tall, so we cut it off arbitrarily and wind up with buildings that look like a bunch of mushrooms. It's really bad for old buildings to live with a lot of mushrooms.

Moss: We're building those as a matter of course in Boston — we take 20 stories off a building but maintain its gigantic parcel so we end up with a squat block. I've always loved the fact that it's so hard to assemble large parcels in Manhattan that you're less likely to do that.

Byard: And slenderness is the thing that makes you love old skyscrapers. We need not be afraid of form. I hope that by the process of education and advocacy we can gradually get beyond that. But we're suffering from the absence of the public sector. There is no public pressure to do good architecture. There's a complete absence of public leadership that understands the importance of good architecture and demands it.

Moss: Everyone's afraid that the next person who tries could turn out to be a Robert Moses.

Byard: Sure. There are lots of things that might go wrong. But the leadership will come when our society begins to demand it. It's going to have to start with those of us who are educated enough to gradually turn around our game, and say we want architecture to help us deal with our problems.

Moss: Our arguments are going to have to get better.

Byard: And our arguments must get better. We have to become much more convincing about the power of architecture. We need to embrace it! ■■■

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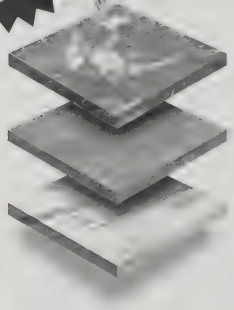

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Letter from Florence

by Peter Forbes FAIA

photo: James Morris

Peter Forbes FAIA moved his practice from Boston to Florence in 1999. He also maintains an office in Seal Harbor, Maine.

It probably isn't fair to compare many other cities to Florence for sheer constructed force, or, for that matter, for the physical beauty of its inhabitants, the savor of its native cuisine, the grace of its setting in the landscape, or the elegance of its fashion. The art museums aren't too shabby, either.

Florence had the good sense to hire the best architects available at the moment of the city's greatest economic power — and its economic power in the 14th and 15th centuries was very substantial indeed. At that moment, which we glibly refer to as the Renaissance, a remarkable group of designers were constantly at work: Brunelleschi, Ghiberti, Alberti, Michelozzo, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Vasari. Both private citizens and the *comune* had the cash to build well and the vision to give a remarkably free hand to their architects. Those of us fortunate enough to live here today are the beneficiaries of that vision.

And yet this city, home to more icons of the Renaissance than any other, locus of eight of the "top ten" cultural landmarks in Italy, refuses to be a fly trapped in amber. Certainly Florentine architects, especially younger ones, chafe under the tedious permitting procedures. Yet, to one who has observed — and railed against — the mediocre pastiches and meager imitations of past styles as championed by Boston's multitude of design review boards and supinely accepted by Boston's architects, Florence — both its citizens and its architecture — has a refreshing capacity to accommodate radical change.

Over the past two decades, in times of economic boom sufficient to sustain genuine experiment, architecture in Boston has steadfastly imitated historic styles, wrapping new functions in a thin veneer of brick or stone lest the ghosts of Bulfinch and Faneuil be disturbed. Even the recent attempts at something more "contemporary" have the uncomfortable self-consciousness of a teenager defying the dress code. In the same period Florence, operating within a much less secure economy, deftly, elegantly, and ruthlessly continues to reinvent itself.

Via Tournabuoni, for example, is one of the most historically important streets in the city, lined with 14th- to 16th-century palazzi. For over a hundred years it has been a venue for expensive pastry shops, bookstores, leather and fabric merchants. Today it is rapidly and unsentimentally reinventing itself as Fashion Way, a change that involves prominent and intensely modern changes to buildings that we all studied in architectural history classes. In the first block from the Santa Trinita bridge over the Arno, Audrey Hepburn's favorite bootmaker, Ferragamo, has newly redesigned its showrooms juxtaposing frameless glazing, stainless-steel hardware, 15th-century frescos and 14th-century rusticated masonry. In the next block one of the many Medici palaces will have a new Giorgio Armani store designed by minimalist *par excellence* Claudio Silvestrin. Diagonally across the street, fashion *enfant terrible* Roberto Cavalli's new flagship store — a paean to Modernist excess — is flanked by coolly elegant Gucci and Max Mara, all three in late 17th-century buildings. Would such stridently Modern architectural exercises be tolerated, let alone encouraged in an historic district in Boston?

A couple blocks away from Via Tournabuoni is a building that offers an object lesson in the difference between the two cities. Alberti's Loggia dei Rucellai, built in 1466, is a comparatively small but important historic structure. Within the last 20 years it has been converted to exhibition space by inserting a glass curtain wall behind the 15th-century arcade. The glass wall, boldly constructed of enormous lights of glass held in an elegantly minimal steel frame, reveals the historic structure while unabashedly reveling in its own Modernist bravura.

Contrast this solution of "adaptive reuse" with that of The Architects Building in downtown Boston, home of the Boston Society of Architects. In 1989, the Society acquired a handsome, if historically undistinguished, stone building for its offices, meeting spaces and, it was envisioned, public exhibition space on the ground floor. However, when the BSA proposed that a glass curtain wall be constructed behind the arcade on the ground floor to reveal the original structure and enclose the space for contemporary use, a furor arose. Introduce something modern into an "historic" building in historic downtown Boston? Horrors. The solution advocated by the governing historic commission — even championed by the BSA's representative on that board — was to fill in the arches with little panes of glass; a bizarre intellectual construct which imagines the invention of an historically correct curtain wall in mid-19th century Boston. That there hadn't been such a wall and that what was proposed revealed the original structure was of no interest. The theme of "Historic Boston" was of greater importance than its reality. Ultimately a generic storefront system, clumsily fitted within the arches, was approved — a monument to economic expedience, tepid and uncontroversial, non-design preferable to design.

How does this happen? What causes this difference, the difference between the historic and the historicist, between the exuberant reality of a living city and the lifeless façades of tourist "destination" theme-park urbanity? What causes one community to revel in the witty, brilliant transformation of the historic and the other to shrink from the slightest semblance of alteration?

There appear to be two coincident explanations. One, of course, is the incredible architectural and experiential phenomenon that is Florence. Given the potency of that armature, little apart from massive high-rise development — which the present economy of Florence cannot support — could fundamentally alter the whole. It can be argued that within such an overarching context one has greater freedom to experiment at the subordinate scale. Still one must ask, given that dominant architectural whole, why are the experiments so bold? Why don't Florentines want to copy and "preserve" that which is so famous and so seductive to tourists?

The answer is the second phenomenon: sublime self-confidence. Italians in general and Florentines in particular unquestioningly believe that they can design anything and it will be more beautiful than anything that anyone else in the world could achieve.

The genesis of this self-confidence was brought home to me when I noticed a school group of ten-year-olds following their young teacher through the Uffizi Gallery. While they waited to enter there was the inevitable pushing and yelling, but once in the galleries, the children listened intently to what their teacher was telling them about the art. What gripped these kids who moments before had been no more orderly than their counterparts all over the world? What magic spell had this Florentine teacher spun? I sidled over to eavesdrop on her lecture.

"This drawing is by Girlandaio. He was born here in Florence and lived over near San Lorenzo..." The students' heads nodded. They knew the neighborhood. Girlandaio was their guy. "This drawing is by Michelangelo who studied with Girlandaio. He was from near Arezzo, but moved to Firenze as a boy and lived on Via Bentaccordi." Again the heads nodded. OK, so he wasn't born here, but he's our guy, too. And so on through room after room: Botticelli, Rafaelo, Leonardo, Cellini. These were their people, Florentines by birth or choice, and they could make anything more beautiful than anyone else. So, by extension, can all Florentines. That is what one does in Florence. It is logical then that a change to the fabric of this beautiful city by a Florentine, or even someone chosen by a Florentine, could be expected to be beautiful. And in fact, this is Florence's design criterion: Design what you want in the manner you wish, as long as it is as good as everything around it.

Now *there* is a design review process one can live with! ■■■

Two Views:

Natural Landscapes

by Kathy Leahy

It's all too evident that sprawling subdivisions are replacing Massachusetts' treasured landscapes and wildlife habitats. Unchecked stormwater caused by poor site planning and infrastructure design, and runoff from acres of lawns, driveways and parking lots contaminate rivers, streams, and coastal waters. Keeping those huge lawns green requires enormous quantities of water, pushing already stressed rivers, well fields, and aquifers to the brink of collapse.

Our home-building habits also exact enormous civic and economic costs. Planning boards and conservation commissions feel besieged by the steady stream of builders and developers seeking subdivision permits. The builders and developers are frustrated by a slow, expensive, and implacable permitting process. In short, no one is satisfied, and the erosion of the Commonwealth's finest features continues.

The reality is that most local zoning actually encourages the kind of land-consumptive subdivisions that creep across our landscapes. Increasing lot size does little to ameliorate these problems and often adds a new one: excluding middle-income home-buyers.

But a new solution can be found in Randall Arendt's "Conservation Subdivision Design" (CSD) model, which can ease the planning, permitting, and open-space protection impasse. The four-step CSD process turns conventional subdivision planning upside down by reversing the sequence of the typical process:

1. Identify conservation areas, ideally as much as 50 percent of the total parcel *in addition to* the wetlands and other areas constrained by regulation;
2. Locate house sites;
3. Align streets and trails;
4. *Then* draw lot lines.

In 1998, a group of people on Boston's North Shore with seemingly antagonistic attitudes and conflicting backgrounds — conservation, open-space protection, planning, development, and real estate — explored our common interests and how to remove barriers that keep us from achieving those goals. We all want to preserve open space, landscapes, water quality, wildlife habitat, and community character. We want to provide interesting, livable, high-quality housing. The development and real estate communities need to achieve financial goals, and developers and planning boards want a flexible and unambiguous permitting process. Preserving high-quality open space and reducing the environmental burden borne by natural habitats are important to the conservation community. "The Green Neighborhoods Alliance" was born when we agreed that CSD could help us all.

Thanks to the Alliance, Massachusetts municipalities now have two brand-new model bylaws that can help them preserve critical wildlife habitat, beloved landscapes, treasured vistas, important wetland buffer zones and other valued open space while simultaneously accommodating new housing development. The Alliance has developed principles of Open Space Residential Design (OSRD) based on CSD, but tailored for Massachusetts communities. Alliance members are fanning out across the state giving presentations and providing technical assistance to promote OSRD. Four towns (Newbury, Sharon, West Newbury, and Wilmington) have adopted OSRD-style bylaws and several more are moving in that direction.

Can developers build and market Green Neighborhoods? Can realtors sell homes in Green Neighborhoods? Will residents enjoy living in a Green Neighborhood and then sell their home at a profit? Surveys and statistics from other parts of the state and country encourage us with an emphatic "*Yes!*" But this is our next challenge, and home design can play a significant role in meeting this challenge. Well-designed homes that fit into the landscape, provide views and access to the open space, and maintain privacy in what is typically a more densely developed neighborhood, will be a key factor in achieving success. A Green Neighborhood must not be restricted to an up-scale clientele; municipalities can incorporate OSRD principles in every residential zoning district, and every housing market — from affordable to "out-of-sight." The reward is a high-quality subdivision and preservation of valued open space features for all — a truly Green Neighborhood. ■■■

Kathy Leahy is director of Massachusetts Audubon Society: North Shore Conservation Advocacy in Wenham, Massachusetts. She is a founding member of the Green Neighborhood Alliance. For more information on Green Neighborhoods, contact her at 978-927-1122, or endicott@massaudubon.org

Preserving the Land

Designed Landscapes

by Ethan Carr

The preservation of the cultural landscapes of what is sometimes called the "recent past" has incited some of the most revealing design debates in years. Inevitably — and predictably — many preservationists have their hackles up as some of the monuments of postwar American design — including urban plazas, corporate parks, sprawling subdivisions, national park "visitor centers," and even interstate highways — are now considered "historic," often with an eye to securing some kind of listing in the National Register of Historic Places. After all, the National Register itself is a creature of the 1966 Historic Preservation Act — an act in which Congress responded to the widely held public opinion that the "slum clearance" and heroic "renewal" projects of the era had done irreparable harm to the cultural fabric of society. For many preservationists, there is an intolerable irony in seeing the provisions of the Historic Preservation Act applied to the very products of Modernist-era planning and design that they feel necessitated the legislation in the first place.

Clearly, the management of post-World War II landscapes as "historic resources" will differ from the preservation of the not-so-recent past. While some of the work of the era's most important landscape architects (Thomas Church, Dan Kiley, Lawrence Halprin, for example) has begun to be recognized, the vast majority of postwar landscapes remain unstudied and even unnoticed, prompting Peter Walker and Melanie Simo to characterize them as "invisible gardens." Nevertheless, the sheer volume of landscape development over the last 50 years probably exceeds the total for all earlier periods of American history combined. But without adequate contextual research, even identifying historically significant landscapes will be impossible. How will we determine which housing tracts or shopping centers, for example, are actually important parts of our history, and not just more sprawl or blight?

The successful preservation of Modernist-era landscapes will also require an examination of the theoretical framework of preservation as it is practiced today. The word "preservation" suggests a resistance to change, yet the practice has always involved an inventive transformation of a place, as well as an imaginative structuring of its past. But the idea that preserving landscapes could be — indeed *had* to be — a kind of creative transformation became more problematic after World War II. Postwar preservation defined itself through its opposition to the excesses of Modernist-era planning and public works. Not only historic preservation, but also what was once called "scenic preservation," were changed by a wave of legislation, most notably the Wilderness Act (1964), the Historic Preservation Act (1966), the National Environmental Policy Act (1969), and dozens of similar pieces of state and local law. The pace and scale of postwar modernization had forced preservation into new roles; many of those roles have since become far too easily characterized merely as opposition, not as strategies for creative change or instruments of "progress."

Many of us are involved today in assessing the historical significance of the designed landscapes of the very period that produced the institutional and theoretical context in which we are practicing. But the "recent past" only becomes "historic" as we all come to realize that the works of that period represent an era that has ended, which is distinguishable from our current situation. And so as we consign the postwar world to the past, we are trying to do so within a theoretical framework that remains very much a part of that past. It remains to be seen how successful this effort will be without developing new preservation theory and practice that will be more the product of our own, postmodern cultural context. The practical and theoretical difficulties raised by the preservation of the "recent past" should stimulate practitioners to assimilate more contemporary theory and devise fresh meanings and processes for the preservation of postwar landscapes. ■■■

professor in the department of landscape architecture and regional planning at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He has previously [illegible] design offices. His book, *[illegible]scape Architecture and the National Park Service* received an ASLA honor award in 1998

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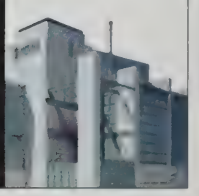


Covering the Issues

Periodical roundup

by Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, teaches the architecture studios at Smith College and maintains a practice in Boston.

Annus horribilis... In this year of years, in the piles of year-end lists and reflections, noticeably absent is any mention of the built environment. Specific buildings were targeted and New York's urban fabric was inexorably changed, but the citations in the general media thus far center (understandably) on politics, the economy, and war — or the entertainments that help us forget. One notable exception comes from novelist Anna Quindlen ("Weren't We All So Young Then?" *Newsweek*, December 31, 2001). In this intimate, eloquent essay, she relates personal reactions to the physical presence and absence of the Twin Towers. "Too much blue sky, and beneath it, just nothing. Who knew open space could be so terribly sad?"

Can't keep a good town down... One of the most straightforward, comprehensive discussions of current building in New York is Jonathan Mahler's "Gotham Rising," in the December/January issue of *Talk*. His argument: Before our eyes, a new skyline is under construction. Mahler focuses not on the World Trade Center site, but on the two dozen (!) other significant projects now underway in Manhattan. In doing so, he addresses issues near and dear to Boston, too, including the import of starchitects, a troubled Modern legacy and the recent rebirth of cutting-edge design, the negative and positive effects of a complicated city approvals process, and the ability of buildings to catalyze development and culture. Maybe the recently deceased *Talk* wouldn't have lost $50 million in two years if it had spent less money on parties and more on features like this.

Have you hugged your client today?... They weather the blame but rarely share the credit for bringing great projects into being, suggests Karen E. Steen in "Great Design Clients" (*Metropolis*, January 2002). In this string of articles celebrating clients ranging from the Walker Art Center to the movie-mogul Coen brothers, ten writers emphasize what makes great clients so great: communication, financial and political skills, and the ability to summon the best from their architects and designers. A well-deserved accolade.

Talk about clients!..."Wynton Marsalis Builds His Dream House" proclaims the cover of the December 24 issue of *New York* magazine. It's not what you think; this "house" will be open to the world: Lincoln Center is constructing "the world's first performing-arts facility built specifically for jazz" on the former site of the New York Coliseum at Columbus Circle. As artistic director of jazz at Lincoln Center, Marsalis is working with designer Rafael Viñoly, who also knows a thing or two about music (he considered a career as a pianist before opting for architecture). With directives like "We want all 100,000 square feet to dance and sing, to be syncopated and unpredictable but not eccentric," both client and architect provide interesting musings on what it means to translate jazz into building. ■■■

Books

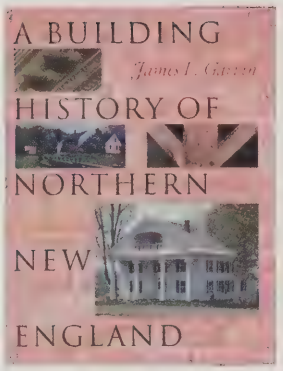
A Building History of Northern New England
by James L. Garvin

University Press of New England, 2001

Reviewed by Robert Adam

There are many titles available on the preservation book list, but *The History of Building in Northern New England*, by noted New Hampshire architectural historian Jim Garvin, fills a void that has plagued the preservation community for many years. Most "old house" books offer photo essays rather than substantive information about the construction of historic buildings. Garvin, however, has crafted a comprehensive primer of substantial sophistication about the evolution of the historic materials, styles, and details of domestic architecture. Although its title is regional, the information is applicable for much of the Northeast and beyond.

The book has been organized into three main chapters that explain the evolution of building technology and materials, stylistic development, and determining building age. Garvin begins by describing major materials beginning with the 17th century and, within each section, chronologically relates how advances in material technology, availability, and production have helped to shape building forms and practices up through the 20th century. He also chronicles how changes in tastes and social development combine to further shape building practices, especially in the 19th century. In the last chapter, he discusses the evolution of common features such as moldings, doors, and sash and how to date these features. Garvin is perhaps known best for his 18th- and early-19th-century scholarship, but he has also provided the history of construction up to the 20th century and includes welcome tidbits such as the history of pre-cut and kit houses in New England.



Garvin's style is easy to read, and the organization of topics is clear and deliberate. His discussions are concise and accurate, although they occasionally feel as if he were holding back, a perception that is balanced by an extensive bibliography that is topically sectioned and indexed. Illustrations and photographs from contemporary as well as archival collections enhance the text. The drawings by the author are excellent and add significant detail to the text through clear and accurate exploded views of many types of joinery and comparisons of evolving features such as moldings, sash profiles, doors, and hardware.

The process of preserving buildings takes many forms. Sometimes we are blinded by our new purpose of adaptive uses and reluctant to see features beyond those of our immediate interest. This is true for the kitchen remodeling as well as the complete "restoration." All too often that zeal leads to the loss of significant historic fabric in the name of preservation, simply because we don't know what is valuable. While Garvin's book does not seek to make those judgments, it arms the reader with the primary information about materials and style that can lead to better decisions and more sophisticated understanding of the meaning and value of historic buildings.

Robert Adam is the director of the preservation carpentry program at the North Bennet Street School in Boston (www.nbss.org).

The Same Ax, Twice: Restoration and Renewal in a Throwaway Age
by Howard Mansfield

University Press of New England, 2000

Reviewed by William Morgan

The Same Ax, Twice is one of those quiet books that foments revolution. Although identified as merely "journalist and author" (and by implication, non-scholar?), Howard Mansfield has just the right combination of erudition and humor to challenge conventionally held ideas about historic preservation. Like *In the Memory House*, his wise 1993 exploration of the New Englander's defining relationship with the past, *The Same Ax, Twice* ought to be on your bookshelf along with Wendell Berry and Noel Perrin.

Mansfield uses the metaphor of the farmer who "has had the same ax his whole life — he has only changed the handle three times and the head two times" as a credo for restoration. A tool divorced from its usefulness and placed in a museum becomes a lifeless object, while a "repaired ax is a living tradition." He crafts this into a philosophy about old-house renovations, museum villages, and the design of the landscape, arguing that our disconnected society needs less mummification and more renewal.

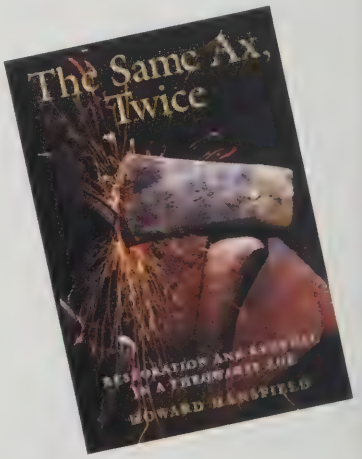
The New Hampshire-based writer turns his Swiftian eye on the let's-play-nostalgia world of Deerfield ("a brilliant misreading of Colonial history"), house museums ("We stand behind the velvet rope, across an abyss, uncomprehending"), and even Hancock Shaker Village (where historically accurate Shaker meals, prepared only to adorn the tables, are fed to the pigs). Often sanitizing history, most restorations are predicated on stopping time, for Americans do not want to deal with decay, oxidization, and ruin. "Everything ever created will rot eventually: the Mona Lisa, the Brooklyn Bridge…most of life is not showing up, as Woody Allen said, but maintenance."

How do we curate our patrimony yet keep it vibrant? How do we avoid cynicism when faced with "Frosty Acres," the junkyard on Robert Frost's New Hampshire farm, or the unbearable twee-ness of Nantucket? The quest takes a less bittersweet tone as Mansfield hooks up with people instead of buildings: Civil War re-enactors, Old Home Day returnees, and lots of New England advocacy groups. Restoration is part of the search for "better community" undertaken by a disconnected America.

We cannot legislate the blessedness of the ideal New England village; nevertheless Mansfield offers some restoration principles and pleas. Tools need to be repaired, not enshrined. Buildings must be alive — a "grain mill without grain is not a mill." He pleads for no more festival markets (we cannot "shop our way back to the past") and no more fake San Francisco trolleys.

"Restoration is renewal—an effort to mend the world." Thus *The Same Ax, Twice* is a timely book about mending. "Good restoration is a prayer, an offering. It's praise, attention paid; it revels in the glory and spirit of this life."

William Morgan is a professor of art at Wheaton College; he has a degree in the restoration and preservation of historic architecture from Columbia University.



Revolution of Forms: Cuba's Forgotten Art Schools
by John Loomis

Princeton Architectural Press, 1999

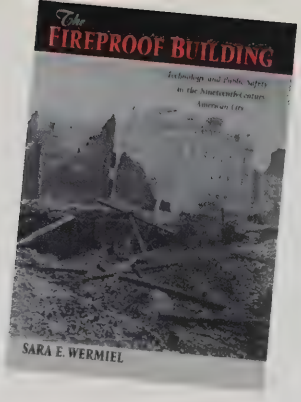
Reviewed by Lee Cott FAIA

Revolution of Forms documents a strange and tragic architectural event. In 1961, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara envisioned five new schools of art — teaching music, modern dance, ballet, plastic arts, and dramatic arts — to symbolize the idealism of the Cuban Revolution and to give it new architectural form. To carry out the design of the National Schools of Art, Castro choose Ricardo Porro, a young Cuban architect who worked around-the-clock with two Italian colleagues, Roberto Gottardi and Victorio Garatti, to create the single most significant Cuban architectural work of the era. But today the project stands neglected, overrun by the jungle, and vandalized by the local population. How such an inspired complex of buildings was imagined, created, partially constructed and occupied, then abruptly abandoned, discredited, and "forgotten" is the subject of this insightful narrative.

John Loomis understands how little most of us know about Cuba and has organized his book accordingly. First is a group of the author's beautiful color photographs of the schools today and a brilliant foreword by the Cuban art critic Gerardo Mosquera, describing the socio-political circumstances surrounding the eventual degradation of the National Schools of Art. Loomis introduces his subject matter with an explanation of Cuba's cultural environment since the late 19th century, emphasizing the matter of Cuban identity — *Cubanidad* — in writing, painting, and finally in architecture. A discussion of the leading architects of the 1940s and '50s who adapted the International Style to Cuban context and climate concludes with an account of Ricardo Porro's personal search for an appropriate expression of the Afro-Cuban culture. Loomis sets the stage for his tale with a delightful series of anecdotes including an account of a round of golf in January 1961 between Fidel Castro and Che Guevara at the Havana Country Club when they decided the acreage could be used more effectively as the campus of the National Schools of Art. (It must have been difficult for Fidel and Che to imagine golf as the sport of the Cuban Revolution!) The main body of the book contains detailed accounts of the five schools, beautifully illustrated with drawings and photographs of the buildings when the project was abandoned in 1965. Loomis' excellent photographs, taken in the 1990s, poetically and hauntingly demonstrate the ravages of time and neglect. The remaining text discusses the degradation and abandonment of the schools and an account of the possible future rehabilitation of the entire complex.

After visiting the National Schools of Art many times in the last few years, I now regard them as indicative of where Modern architecture was headed in revolutionary Cuba — had the Soviet presence not stifled artistic expression. This is a tragic story told beautifully in which the *double entendre* of the title is finally made clear.

Lee Cott FAIA is a founding principal of Bruner/Cott & Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts and adjunct professor of urban design at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, where he is currently teaching design studios using sites in Havana, Cuba. He was the 1996 president of the Boston Society of Architects.



The Fireproof Building: Technology and Public Safety in the Nineteenth-Century American City
by Sara E. Wermiel

The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000

Reviewed by
A. Vernon Woodworth AIA

Architectural history is typically presented as a succession of styles, where form reflects evolving cultural values and aspirations. But style, from a practical point of view, is merely the frosting on the cake. Architectural history is fundamentally a history of building technology, that is, the story of structural problem-solving. Brunelleschi's design for the dome of the Florence cathedral is an example of a brilliant solution to a previously unsolved structural dilemma, providing a bold new form that came to embody the pride and power of an entire city.

Sara Wermiel has adopted the problem-solving perspective as her narrative thread in this remarkable history of the development of fire-resistant construction in the 19th century. This was the age of urbanization, and as cities grew, so did the incidence of conflagrations, with devastating social and economic consequences. While the problem was a social one, the absence of building codes left the solution to individual builders and building owners. Wermiel thoroughly documents these efforts — including the attendant personalities and power struggles — as they evolved from early attempts to build noncombustible buildings (which proved to be too expensive and structurally unwieldy for general application), through the development of iron and brick construction, mill fire protection, and high-rise construction.

One chapter tells the story of the origins of so-called "slow-burning construction" advocated by the innovative factory mutual insurance companies in New England in the second half of the 19th century. These companies were largely responsible for the development of construction practices still used today, from the principle of compartmentalization (limiting a fire to a given area within a building) to isolation of exit stairs and provision of fire-fighting and suppression technology.

It is at this point in Wermiel's story that architects become peripheral to the evolution of fire-safe construction. Architects continued to serve as innovators of construction systems, such as in the development of skeleton construction for high-rise buildings, but the performance of a building and the behavior of its occupants under fire conditions became the focus of a new profession: fire-protection engineering. This new field ultimately generated our modern building codes, which today govern virtually all aspects of construction. Architects now find themselves in the position of following rules written by others, often based on principles and past lessons they don't understand.

The Fireproof Building is a well-written and comprehensive account that sheds light on the design and construction of 19th-century buildings, many of which are now undergoing adaptive re-use under the requirements of modern building and fire codes. With the advent of new building codes from both the International Code Council and the National Fire Protection Association, and with the increasing acceptance of performance-based design, Wermiel's book provides a valuable object lesson to architects that the pursuit of economical and safe construction is fundamental to the enterprise of building; we leave it to others at the peril of the profession.

A. Vernon Woodworth AIA is an architect and code consultant with the Sullivan Code Group in Boston and is chair of the BSA Codes Committee.

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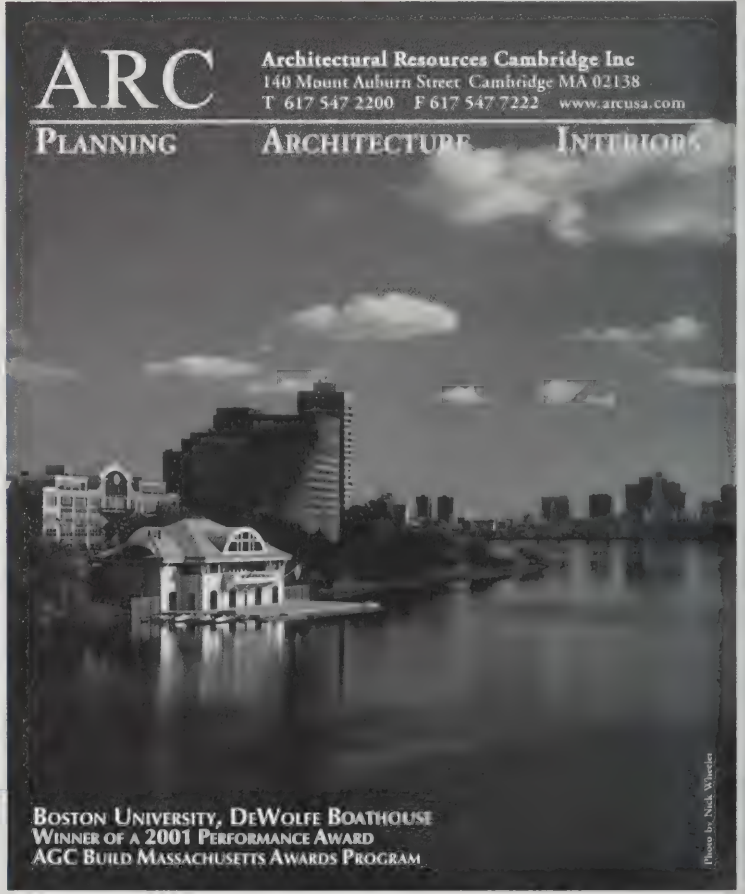

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Muckle & Associates	6
North Bennet Street School www.nbss.org	6
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D.F. Pray www.dfpray.com	34
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Stone Source www.stonesource.com	54
TAMS Architecture Inc. www.tamsconsultants.com	54
Thoughtforms www.thoughtforms-corp.com	outside back cover
Tofias www.tfsandco.com	32
Marc Truant and Associates, Inc. www.mtruant.com	18
Versa-Lok Retaining Wall Systems www.versa-lok.com	21
Richard White Sons, Inc. www.rwsons.com	6
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Other Voices by Robert Saarnio

My departure from New England in 1999 was a challenging decision, but the power of the stunning Midwestern community that drew me away is as compelling as its story. Having relocated from Boston's North Shore to the Detroit area to assume a curatorial position at Cranbrook, I now have more than two years of experience in this unique environment that has inspired a near-evangelical eagerness to share Cranbrook with my fellow New Englanders. What you find may surprise you....

Paul Goldberger has described Cranbrook as "a collection of buildings that are only now achieving the recognition they deserve as comprising [*sic*] one of the greatest campuses ever created in the world." The site includes 315 acres of rolling woodlands within the community of Bloomfield Hills, a Greenwich-esque suburb 18 miles north of Detroit with the highest per-acre real estate values in Michigan. Originally developed by George Bough Booth and his wife Ellen Scripps Booth as a country estate beginning in 1904, the property evolved into the academic community we know today after 1925.

"We were unwilling to go through life with our aims centered mainly in the pursuit of wealth and with a devotion wholly to the ordinary opportunity for social satisfaction..." stated Mr. Booth in 1927. This deep commitment by the founders to spiritual development, community service, and personal growth through educational opportunity resulted in the creation of six enduring institutions: Christ Church Cranbrook; Brookside School (pre-K to 5th grade); Cranbrook Kingswood Middle School; Cranbrook Kingswood Upper School; Cranbrook Academy of Art & Museum; and the Cranbrook Institute of Science.

The Booths' decision in 1925 to hire Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen as campus architect was to have profound aesthetic and pedagogical implications for their new community. Over the next 25 years, Saarinen left his mark, not only in his design of campus buildings, but also as the first director of the Cranbrook Academy of Art, which attracted talents such as Charles and Ray Eames, Carl Milles, Harry Bertoia, and Florence Knoll — all similarly drawn to the excitement of artistic collaboration.

After the deaths of the Booths in the late 1940s and Saarinen in 1950, the community's art, scientific, and educational divisions continued to thrive, but architectural distinction was slow to follow. It was not until the early 1990s that the community began to embrace its tradition of architectural excellence, following completion of a new masterplan. A walk across Cranbrook today reveals new buildings that expand the meaning of "respectful addition."

An addition to the Brookside School by Peter Rose. Steven Holl's extension of Saarinen's original Cranbrook Institute of Science. A natatorium for Cranbrook Schools by Tod Williams Billie Tsien. And, currently under construction, a studio building designed by Rafael Moneo for the graduate students of the Academy of Art. Each architect has found a vocabulary of form, materials, and color that fundamentally acknowledges the Finnish master, but which also extends the Cranbrook traditions of handcraft and artisanship, of profound response to the site, and of collaboration with local industry.

Why has this occurred at Cranbrook, and how might Cranbrook serve as a model for successful additions to historic contexts? Certainly Cranbrook selected designers particularly suited to making well-crafted buildings that are at once referential, richly nuanced, and strongly personal. Saarinen himself built here in different modes, reinventing his vocabulary across the campus and creating an architectural environment that is far from stylistically monolithic. Perhaps there is something about his work that is idiosyncratic, unique, and varied enough to elicit inspired responses — something perhaps not as readily achieved in more familiar or unitary historic New England building contexts.

Two buildings — one old, one new — are my favorites. The captivating Saarinen House, designed by Eliel Saarinen in 1930 for his own family, exhibits one of the great Art Deco domestic interiors in the nation, though Deco with a strong Finnish accent. And the Williams/Tsien natatorium is an ethereal place, a swimming pool stretched under a cobalt-blue ceiling punctuated by a constellation of lights of varying diameters and by two hemispherical oculi that open to the sky. Vertical mahogany louvers in the wall, powered hydraulically, admit views and fresh breezes. Boldly addressing Saarinen's campus plan by literally bending itself around the cross-campus axis, the building is permeable, lavish in color — and certain to redefine the meaning of swimming the backstroke.

There is so much more to Cranbrook: the art and science museums; graduate programs in ten design disciplines; the manor house designed by Albert Kahn for the Booths; even the vast copper roof on Saarinen's Kingswood School, a state-of-the-art case study in restoration. I encourage your visit to Cranbrook: a welcoming New England émigré stands ready to examine with you how this community has faced the challenge of reinterpreting its craft traditions and of responding to a modern master.

Robert Saarnio is the curator and collections manager of cultural properties at Cranbrook Educational Community in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. He was previously the curator of architecture at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts. He can be reached at: rsaarnio@cranbrook.edu

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Money

What is it about architects and money? Was there ever a profession so confused, so anguished, by the often precarious balance of compensation, personal values, and self-worth? Was there ever a group (outside politics) that talked so much about an issue with so few results?

In fact, we talk about it so much that we've perfected our own version of Name-That-Tune: we need only a few words to recognize any ostensible reason, argument, or joke about the architect's plight. One of the most familiar, comfortable excuses blames our gentlemen-architect forebears, whose personal freedom from financial worries, disdain for the commercial, and notions of *noblesse oblige* have afflicted their progeny with something akin to a genetic inability to promote the value of their own work. "Don't people understand," architects often wail, "that architects are providing a service to society?"

Well, no. People don't understand. They understand that architects work for rich homeowners and richer developers. The last architectural media darling, Philip Johnson, even managed an adroit combination: a rich homeowner-architect who works for developers. Weirdly, celebrity architects seem to welcome public disaffection as they pursue their personal branding: the current darling, Frank Gehry, has perfected a persona of glum grumpiness. Fast on his heels for the title are Rem Koolhaas and Jean Nouvel, the Nosferatu look-alikes whose sinister scowls suggest that canny investors should consider garlic futures. It's all enough to make Michael Graves seem warm and fuzzy, with his goofy grin and his happily chirping teapots designed for the Target masses.

At the same time, people understand that doctors and lawyers, also descendants of 19th-century aristocratic proto-professionals, *do* provide a service to society. They know this because they watch television. Doctors may live in the biggest houses in every small town in America, but the image of the good-hearted country doctor has been one of the great stalwarts of television, inspiring Drs. Kildare, Welby, Quinn, Quincy, Hansen, and Greene. Lawyers may have to call Johnnie Cochrane one of their own, but television executives recognize the lawyer as that great American character, the defender of the underdog, inspiring Perry Mason, Matlock, Ed-the-bowling-alley-lawyer, and various dedicated big-city district attorneys administering law and order.

The irony is the role of irony in all this. Architects, masters of style because of their relatively limited means but boundless appreciation for good quality, are increasingly associated with purveyors of luxe (think "Rem/Prada"). And, more disturbing, architects themselves have begun to refer to "architecture" ironically, with unspoken quote marks around the term, a wink-wink-nod-nod concession that good design is increasingly a superfluous luxury.

The architecture profession also has its defenders of the underdog; with the recent death of Sam Mockbee FAIA, we have lost one of the greatest. But others remain: Michael Pyatok FAIA, John Wilson FAIA, small firms like The Narrow Gate, and countless others. Today's materialistic culture might have a different definition of "having it all," but it's hard to argue with architects who believe that a life based in creativity and public service is a life well spent.

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA
Editor

2 **Letters to the Editor**

3 **Marginally Architecture**
by Peter Kuttner FAIA

6 **The Architect's Currency:**
What *really* motivates architects
by Michael P. Buckley FAIA
Responses
9 David Tobias
9 Charles Tseckares FAIA
10 Paul Nakazawa AIA
10 Howard Elkus FAIA, RIBA
11 Michael Yusem, Assoc. AIA
11 Laura Miller
12 Lynne Brooks AIA
12 John Wilson FAIA
13 Kitty Ryan

16 **Money, Cities, and Suburbanization**
by Oliver Gillham AIA

20 **Architecture and the Pro-Forma**
by Willy Sclarsic AIA

27 **Samuel Mockbee**
and an Architecture of Decency
by James McCown

36 **Money Talks:**
Learning the language of finance
by Scott Simpson FAIA

40 **Honor and Glory:**
The profession and business of architecture
Victoria Beach AIA talks with
Jeffrey Stein AIA

48 **Letter from Jerusalem**
by Lior Couriel, Assoc. AIA

53 **Covering the Issues**
Periodical roundup
by Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA

54 **Books**

59 **Index to Advertisers**

59 **Site Work**
Web sites of note

60 **Other Voices: Five Fields**
by Alex Beam

2002: Money
Volume 5: Number 2

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Letters

Regarding the review by the Boston Civic Design Commission (BCDC) of our firm's World Trade Center West project, which was used to illustrate "Civic Civility: The Boston Civic Design Commission's First Ten Years" [2001-Year in Review], I would like to address some potential misconceptions relating to the actions of the architect, client, and review agency which may be inferred from the comments attributed to me in the article.

At our initial appearance before BCDC, our firm presented its first schematic revision to our competition-winning scheme, a building featuring a substantial cornice. Since this element, as we came to learn, would have required a building code variance, we as architects explored a number of alternative designs that would have avoided the necessity of additional code review, with its potential of extending the project schedule. One of these design alternates was the elimination of the cornice on the three sides of the building which engaged the public thoroughfares, the condition requiring the code variance.

Upon documenting this scheme, completed just before our presentation to the BCDC, it became clear to both our client, Pembroke Real Estate, and us that our revised design satisfied no one, and that something critical had been lost. It was not possible to modify the drawings prior to the scheduled presentation. By the time we met again with the subcommittee of the BCDC, the building elevations had been completely revised and the competition cornice had been restored. At a subsequent presentation to the BCDC of the final design, the subcommittee recommended approval.

I regret that the compressed snapshot of the process described in your article might suggest that our client was a reluctant proponent of the cornice, or acted only in reaction to comments by the BCDC. This was not the case; it was our client who directed us to seek the required code variance and increased the original project budget to achieve a final design which would meet the urban responsibilities of building on this important site. The project remains for our firm a model of client support and involvement and of thoughtful civic review.

Theodore Szostkowski AIA, Principal
Kallmann McKinnell & Wood Architects, Inc.
Boston

I was intrigued by "Past Masters" in the Spring 2002 "Preservation" issue, in which Paul Byard and Henry Moss discuss the polarization between architects who design new buildings and preservationists. The most effective way to bridge this polarity is education.

Byard describes Columbia University's experimental Chandigarh Studio, a joint design studio for architecture students and preservation students in which new additions were planned for Le Corbusier's buildings at Chandigarh. The studio was highly successful in getting both groups to grasp the essence of Le Corbusier's designs and the ways in which new buildings can strengthen and support old structures. Blending the two disciplines is essential if we are to find intelligent, meaningful ways to work with historic architecture. If we don't understand old buildings — not only their forms and design vocabularies, but also their socioeconomic and political contexts — we won't know what is important to preserve, or why.

I would argue that much of the slavish historicism excoriated in the "Preservation" issue is caused by a lack of knowledge. It is easier to simply replicate materials and details without truly understanding old buildings. When an architect takes the time to understand the meaning of an historic structure — why it was built and why it looks the way it does — it is much simpler for her or him to grasp what aspects are crucial to preserve, to restore, or to replicate in a sympathetic addition, and which aspects might be less important. That knowledge can also give the architect the freedom to depart, when appropriate, from the design vocabulary of the historic building.

Whether we work on old buildings or new, we always work within a cultural context. It is critical that we learn our history: architectural, social, and cultural. Preservationists can translate that knowledge into the architectural process, as proven by Byard's studio.

Marguerite Carnell Rodney
Schoenhardt Architecture + Interior Design
Simsbury, Connecticut

Your special issue devoted to historic preservation [Spring 2002] is inspiring, informative, and provocative. However, it barely touches on one of the most important, but prosaic, challenges of preserving our cultural and architectural heritage. That is taking care of what we already have. Or, as William Morris wrote more than a century ago, we must strive to "stave off decay with daily care."

Earlier this year, I went to a reception in Boston City Hall's main entrance space. Two giant floodlights on a pole illuminated the gathering. Everywhere you looked there was either glare or shadow. None of the original light fixtures designed and installed to illuminate the space worked. None of them have worked in the 25 years I have known the hall, but at least some used to work. Why make it so easy to arm critics of modern architecture by making this great space look sad, neglected, and depressing? Why is it not cared for with the same care that led to its design and construction?

Look at the precursor to Boston's City Hall: Le Corbusier's Dominican monastery called La Tourette just north of Lyons in France. Without its national landmark status, there would not be sufficient funds to repair the leaks that are beginning to compromise this Mecca for conferences, spiritual retreats, and students of architecture.

With deferred maintenance as the alternative to daily care, how wise are the decisions we make on how to undertake occasional major repairs of historic buildings? For example, did it make sense in the 1940s to tear down an 18th-century el on Salem's Witch House in order to build a 17th-century el? Should we not feel fortunate that preservationists fought successfully in the 1980s to insist that the 250-year-old timber framing supporting the bells in Boston's Old North Church be replaced with wood rather than steel? (Would steel framing in Old North been similar to vinyl siding on clapboard houses?)

While most people appreciate the need to preserve the great cultural totems of our civilization, it seems to me there also remains an enormous challenge to persuade people to preserve whole communities. I remember distinctly when a sophisticated, knowledgeable foundation staff member in Cleveland explained to me in all seriousness why a neighborhood of elegant houses built in the 1920s could not be preserved. (White flight had turned them into deteriorating rooming houses.) "Everyone knows," he explained to me, "that wood houses can only last about 50 years."

The fact is that it is easier to balance the annual budget of churches, homeowners, schools, and municipalities by deferring routine maintenance, which is boring anyway. What would it take to make daily care and cyclic repair of historic buildings and whole neighborhoods the norm rather than the exception?

Stanley M. Smith, Executive Director
Historic Boston Incorporated
Boston

Bravo to David Fixler for his article, "The Modern House in New England," in *ArchitectureBoston*'s spring issue on preservation [Spring 2002]. The article went a long way towards raising awareness of metro-Boston's fine collection of Modern houses erected in the 1930s and '40s.

Much more is needed. With the rise of the "teardown" phenomenon, where modestly scaled homes are being bulldozed and replaced by enormous, contractor-built "McMansions," the "Moderns" are particularly vulnerable. I fear that society today, with respect to Modern buildings, is where society in the 1960s and '70s was with respect to Victorian buildings. Unless we act quickly to expand appreciation for Modern buildings — to do some fast "taste making" to enhance the prestige factor of owning a Modern house — we stand to lose much of our Modern architecture, just as we lost so much of our Victorian.

Architects and preservationists alike need to act quickly to assure the preservation of these and other Modern houses across the country. Historic and architectural surveys need to be updated to include buildings from the Modern era. Historic district zoning or landmark designation should be contemplated and instituted where appropriate. Educational and technical support are necessary programs to help owners to be good stewards of those treasures.

The Modern buildings — and especially the houses — are also getting to the age where they're starting to require major repairs. Thus, preservationists are wise to act fast to learn everything they can about Modern buildings in their midst, and to adopt sound principles regarding treatment of the original materials used in construction in order to provide solid leadership and guidance to property owners.

Wendy Nicholas, Director
Northeast Office
National Trust for Historic Preservation
Boston

In 2002, can we all resolve to stop conferring god status on Philip Johnson ["Covering the Issues" Fall 2001]? He was responsible for two truly hideous buildings in this city: the Boston Public Library addition and the Palladian-windowed International Place. His AT&T building in New York was a cynical joke on architecture.

The fact that he launched the careers of a number of prominent architects should not obscure the fact that much of his work is a blight on the landscape and that, in temperament, he represents an image of the architect that many of us work hard to overcome.

Daniel Perruzzi AIA
Boston

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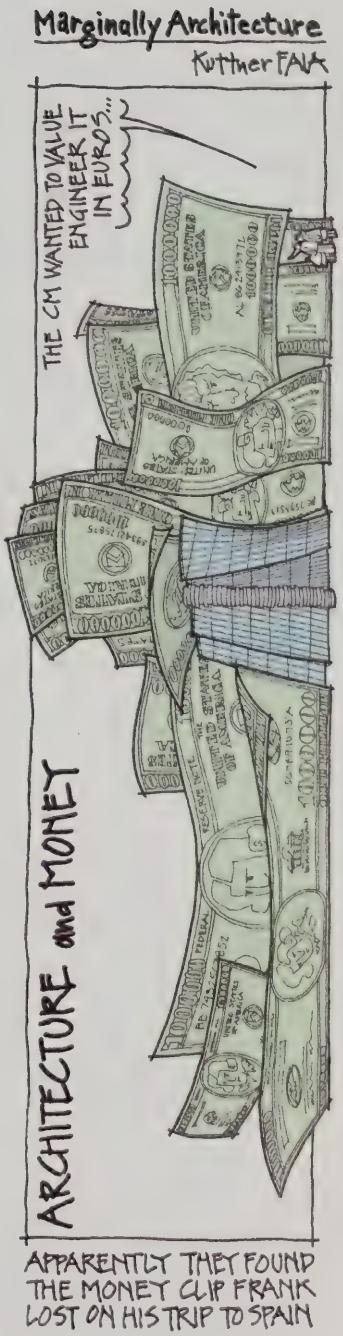
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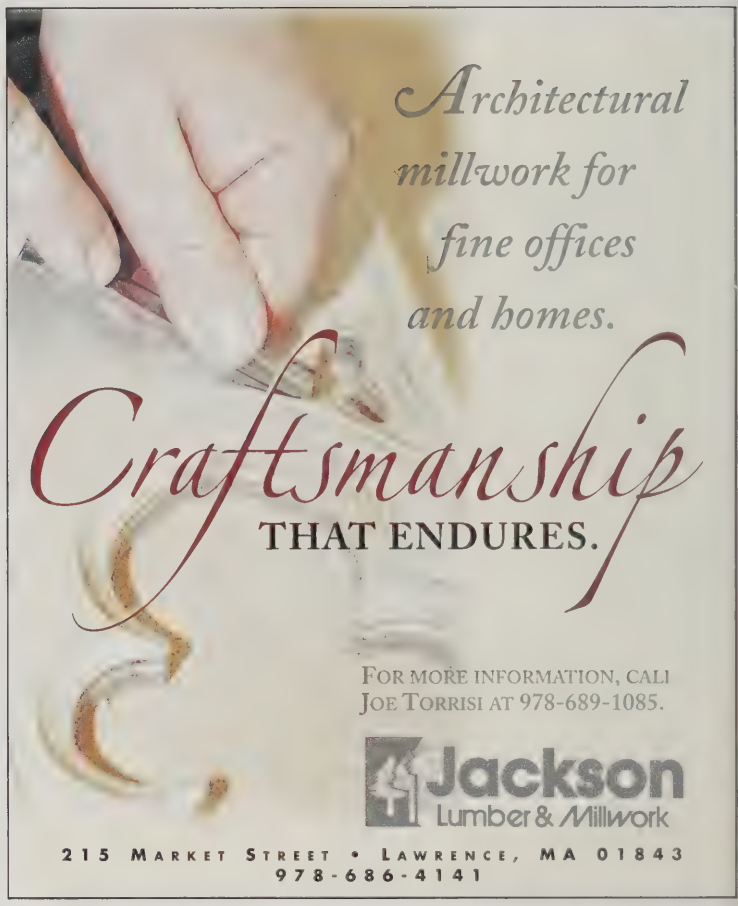

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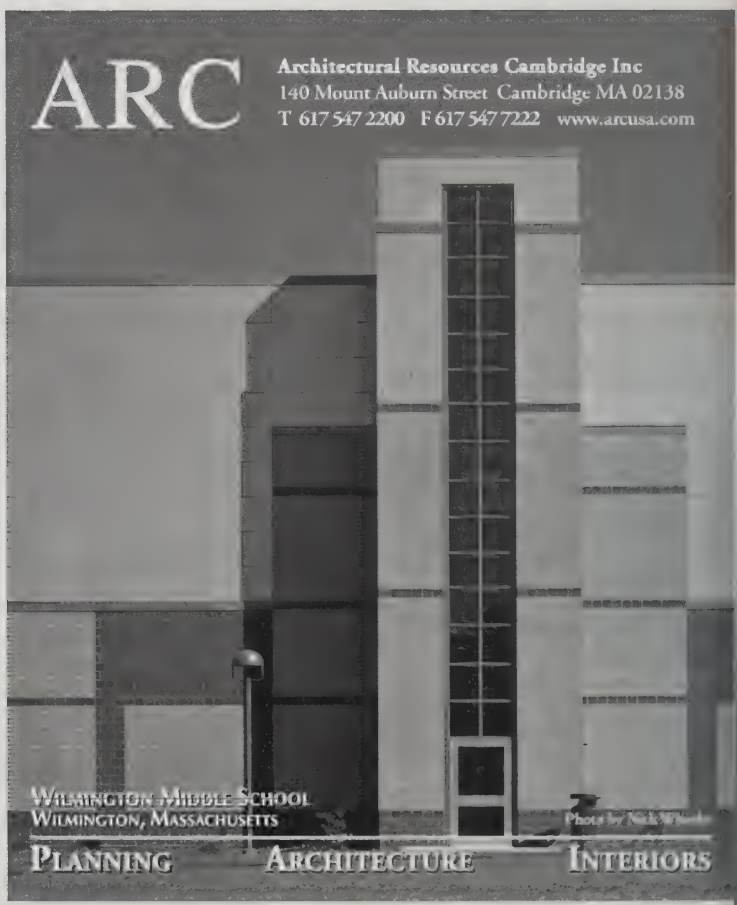
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The Architect's Currency

What really

by Michael P. Buckley FAIA

Editor's note:

In 1985, Michael P. Buckley FAIA, now the director of the Columbia University MSc in Real Estate Development Program, wrote an article for the *Journal of Real Estate Development* that, as the editor noted, provided "a glimpse into the architect's world [suggesting] certain ways in which developers can improve their understanding of — and influence over — the design process."

Buckley presented five principles for enhanced collaboration, which included: "architectural excellence — the developer's special responsibility"; "recognize the architect's currency"; "establish responsive site context and performance-oriented design goals"; "understand the limits of the representational process"; and "creatively negotiate the major stages of the design process."

But his second principle, "recognize the architect's currency," was perhaps the most provocative. By examining the ways architects are compensated, Buckley presented motivations that suggest values and influences at odds with the business world.

Reprinted here is what might now be dubbed Buckley's Second Principle. *ArchitectureBoston* invited nine architects to respond to his observations.

The education of architects is focused exclusively, in both course content and attitude, on the craft of architecture. Little emphasis is placed on the profession's business aspects, and only moderate attention is paid to technical skill enhancement in structural and mechanical systems. Design is the preferred role, and the designer the principal creator. Further, it is expected that an architect with enough talent, ambition, and energy will soon rise within the profession to become venerated and emulated — almost a cult figure.

The average architectural graduate has a threshold salary well below any other rigorously trained professional. Even experienced designers and seasoned technical staff are remarkably low-paid when compared with experienced members of other professions. But designers are not motivated by financial concerns. They expect financial rewards to accompany professional achievements recognized by their industry and by others; however, most have a moderate to poor level of financial sophistication — particularly in connection with their own businesses. Fee setting, for example, tends to be an existential act, as their most recent fee project experience tends to set the standard of subsequent commissions.

Thus, direct compensation is rarely, if ever, the principal concern for an architect. Much more important is the commission, or assignment. Yet, ignorance of effective managerial operations tends to increase the designer's need for ever-larger fees. In many respects, this is remarkably different from the accomplished painter or sculptor, whose work value is set by collectors and a competitive marketplace.

motivates architects

Architecture is a collaborative act, requiring the technical experience of many. As a result, even the major world-class "cult" designers require large staffs and a high level of organization to implement their ideas and concepts. The lower their level of organization (contrasted to the level of their imagination and creativity), the more cost-burdensome are their architectural practices and the less profitable their overall business.

The Designer's Ego

As a result of the typical architectural education, his arbitrarily high position in society, and — most particularly — peer group pressure to achieve through design, the architect's ego is by nature very large. It is also well-protected by a screen of peculiar logic and philosophy. It is this screen of rules, formulas, artistic movements, and manipulation of the untrained laymen that protects the architectural designer from too-potent criticism and from the debilitating effects of reality. Without this screen of logic and architectural philosophy, most of the architect's creative process would be far too exposed against a more rigorous economic logic or even moral ethic.

Thus, a high-quality designer is involved in the constant search for an intellectual "grounding" of his or her personal aspirations in form, shape, and material expression. The craft of architecture (manipulation of space, form, color, and material) is widely admired, from experienced practitioner to experienced designer: that is, there is sustained, internal respect for the craft of architecture within the profession itself.

The architect's ego is further reinforced by the notion of simultaneous achievement. This notion is close to the Renaissance ideal of Virtue — the notion of mastery in diverse skills. One was expected to be a diplomat, a warrior, a poet, and an artist, all at the same time. Today, one can find an architect designing buildings as well as stainless-steel flatware, furniture, and custom fabric wall hangings. Not only accepted, it is, rather, expected. With a few exceptions, the significant cult designers do more than simply design buildings.

Finally, the architect's ego is protected by well-developed manipulation skills. Through incantations of a particular design philosophy, highly stylized three-dimensional models, and extraordinarily evocative visual depictions of various designs, the cult designer has acquired, by the time of his or her ascendancy, an excellent manipulative vocabulary to further his or her design intentions.

Architectural Recognition

Every eminent candidate for the status of cult figure has already developed several levels of recognition:

Private: Peer group knowledge of the designer's skills and acceptance of his or her level of virtuosity by others equally skilled.

Professional: Recognition on the speaking and university teaching circuit — along with some professionally sponsored recognition (such as Fellowship in the American Institute of Architects or National Academy of Arts) — and speaker slots at professional conferences (such as the American Institute of Architects, NACORE, ULI, ICSC, NAHB, or National Mortgage Bankers).

Public: Placing of custom articles by the designer, or spreads of published work in journals such as *Progressive Architecture*, *Architectural Record*, and the *AIA Journal* or *Interiors Magazine* in the United States; Japanese magazines such as *A+U*; or a number of European magazines. There is also recognition in the popular press including, for the more elevated cult figures, reviews by recognized architectural critics in *The New York Times*, *Miami Herald*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *The Washington Post*. For others, there is general news coverage in newspapers, of which *The New York Times* is pre-eminent. Finally, there is recognition in popular magazines. Examples include *Esquire*'s recent article on Architectonica and Philip Johnson's coverage in *Time*.

The Cult Designer's Currency

The cult designer is rewarded in ways that do not resemble the incentives for most business-oriented professionals. It could be argued that every skilled craftsman, with adequate opportunity, works to the same level of recognition and achievement. Yet there exists some evidence that architectural designers are somewhat unique in the type of currency they will accept.

Reputation is one kind of currency. Recognition by the architectural educational establishment is the first and most heralded evidence of an emerging reputation. Exposure through professional journals (especially foreign journals) is a close second. Finally, public recognition is the last and least important evidence to a designer of his or her emerging reputation.

Product reinforcement is currency of another kind. Simply stated: a highly skilled designer needs to see visible evidence of his or her skills. The most obvious is the built product, a finished building in its environment. However, cult designers have existed with very little built product but, instead, extensive publication of their design. This form of design, known as "paper architecture," has an extremely valid position in the hierarchy of currencies acceptable to designers.

Lifestyle, too, is gladly accepted. A recognized designer values a lifestyle which will afford architecturally related travel, since journeys to foreign countries (both accessible and remote) to visit architectural shrines play a big part in his or her experience. Good designers will also have developed a consciousness of trends in the arts — especially visual arts. They will exhibit eclectic connections to contemporary societal trends, both cultural and political. An emerging cult-status designer exhibits and values social connectedness with cultural and political talent. This includes personal interchanges with competent intellects in other disciplines (rarely extending to collaboration, however) and a form of "base touching" and "concept/idea checking" that exists within such social connections. ■■■

Excerpted from "Creative Design Management" by Michael P. Buckley, first published in *Journal of Real Estate Development*, vol. 1, no. 2, page 52-70, Fall 1985; reprinted with permission of the author.

journals
ality of assignment

David Tobias practiced architecture for 14 years before becoming a financial consultant in Boston.

Charles N. Tseckares FAIA is a principal of CBT/Childs Bertman Tseckares, Inc., in Boston.

I have not been involved with an architectural practice for eight years. Nevertheless, I assumed that the developer's contempt for architects as characterized in Mr. Buckley's essay would have subsided by now, and yet I still hear snickers and jokes about the financial incompetence of architects. The caricature of architects with a diminished magnitude for financial reward seems as tired now as it did in 1985 when the article was penned. At that time, the collapse of the US real estate market and the savings-and-loan crisis in 1986 were just about to unfold. The stock market crash was to follow a year later in 1987. So much for "more rigorous economic logic."

The article depicts the gulf between architectural practice and business practice as irreconcilable. Buckley's analysis carries the thesis further, depicting the architect as practicing a kind of economic monasticism, withdrawing completely from the economic world. There may be some truth to that; there is in the practice of architecture an impulse to substitute service to humanity for wealth. But surely Buckley is mistaken if he thinks architects are pathological in their oceanic sense of ego. Some might even say that such a phenomenon is reserved for those who make money, lots of money.

I may sound as if I am defending the high ego-low pay architect as presented by Buckley. Instead, I'm trying to point to what economists like to call the "revealed preference" of architects. Architects are without a doubt some of the brightest, hardest-working professionals around, and, yes, they take money seriously. They are not paid well enough for what they do. The discontent of low wages has yet to bring a true struggle for change. But that does not mean that energy is not focused privately on the generation of wealth.

Currency has taken many forms through the ages. The marketplace establishes price as well as true value. Perhaps ours is the age of the divinity of money; we believe in its omniscient power to reconcile all other possible currencies. But those silly architects — they would much prefer a gold medal to a gold MasterCard. And that's priceless.

David Tobias

At any cocktail party, when people hear there's an architect in their midst, it takes less than a minute for someone to say that he or she once considered becoming an architect. Where paths not traveled and fantasy jobs are concerned, our profession rivals the fabled Vermont bed-and-breakfast in popularity.

In both instances, the yearning expressed is for work that is more "hands on" than whatever it is that's usually done from 9 to 5. It's hard to say whether such realities as pro-bono (i.e. unpaid) work would burst any bubbles. This is, after all, the only profession so entwined with public service that it needs no equivalent to the Hippocratic Oath. But never mind that — the object of longing is valid: the proper balance of financial reward and professional satisfaction throughout one's life.

This, in essence, is the "architect's currency" that Michael Buckley is writing about. There's no denying that the currency is unstable, as he indicates; there are more business failures among start-up architectural firms than in any other profession, a gamble on par with opening a restaurant. Consultants point to the operational inefficiency inherent in multi-category practice — the steep learning curve, the size of staff, the unavoidable overhead — and advise specialization for profit's sake. Designing a variety of buildings, though, is one of the chief joys of architecture. It also suggests a different terminology might be more useful than the one that Buckley offers. "Architect's capital" is an older concept, referring to a cumulative body of knowledge. It's a newer concept as well, expressing the means of diversification that keeps the profession afloat while other endeavors are sinking.

There's a certain sophistication in that fact that we architects feel less anxiety over the conflict of self-worth and one's salary potential. It's a lot more comfortable to drive a VW and be happy than to drive a Mercedes and be perpetually distraught. In fact, I believe we could be excellent advisors to people in the other fields who are searching desperately to find happiness and contentment in their work lives.

Charles N. Tseckares FAIA

Academic appointm

Trave

Buckley's cynical portrayal of the "architect's currency" is not an entirely inaccurate cartoon regarding a certain segment of American practice circa 1985. But consider what one could observe about the corresponding segment of "real estate professionals" during the same period. Does anyone remember "The Donald?" Maybe that economic cycle thrived on cultivating a nasty stand-off between two groups of unrepentant (and now largely irrelevant) egomaniacs.

Our world has changed so much since then, and so has the landscape of business and practice. Globalization has all but eradicated the vestiges of complacency in the design professions (as well as in business), eviscerating firms and individuals alike who cling to versions of Buckley's formulations of smugness. We now have a bigger problem: design and business are now intertwined culturally as a way to gain competitive advantage in the global marketplace. Architecture and business currencies have merged into "biz-design." We are all liberated to despoil the earth together, creating vast wastelands of junk and spectacle at every conceivable scale. We are, finally, all on the same page, happy to speak glowingly and uncritically of efficiencies and profits. Architectural practices are now domesticated to feed on the lowest common denominators of success. Finally, "design professionals" are accepted as reasonable business people in a world gone mad.

But there are hopeful signs of a new earnestness: Design students who reject falseness and search for practical ways to create and rebuild communities, reclaim land ruined by previous generations, and conserve critical world resources. They know that life is the only real currency. Are practices and businesses ready for these young people? A revolution is likely.

Paul Wesley Nakazawa AIA

The myth of the architect living for the sake of art alone is counterproductive for both the architectural profession and those who benefit from its services. This myth is rooted in the misconception that the architect is a remote and independent figure, when in reality the architect is a central figure in the coordination of the complex building process.

The value of the architect in designing projects sometimes amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars in investment extends far beyond the creativity and strength of an overall vision. It derives from a thorough understanding and effective interpretation of the client's programmatic, functional, and economic objectives in response to a particular market opportunity. This ability comes from the application of years of technical expertise and practical experience in putting together detailed, fully coordinated designs — designs for increasingly complex structures which must conform to extensive requirements for public safety, security, environmental and community concerns. It is the sum total of this combined expertise of art, technical, and managerial capability that encompasses the true value of the architect. It is difficult to attract those with the facility to achieve all of this to a profession that does not reward them. Furthermore, the reality of architecture is that it is an expensive service to provide.

Good architects and urban designers are critical to the future of the American landscape. Developers are their essential partners, with the courage, perseverance, and financial acumen to realize these visions. Collaboration is the key, and with it, respect for the full value of both partners.

Howard F. Elkus FAIA, RIBA

Peer group esteem

ents and intellectual connections

Like most of my colleagues, I struggle between the commitments and realities of my everyday life and the idealized tenets of my architectural education, now a decade past. And although I admit that I often have trouble managing both, I am far from succumbing to an acceptance of it.

I am frustrated by the argument that architects inherently seek out alternative forms of compensation to offset their mediocre financial performance, most notably peer recognition and prestigious cultural and academic affiliations. I admit that such recognition has appeal to me, but it is hardly a substitute for the American Dream. Certainly any accomplished professional is entitled to such accolades, even those who make a lot of money. So the question then becomes, why are architects in particular so ill-equipped to deal with their profession's business aspects?

The answer is not that we share some peculiar innate behavior but, rather, that it is learned. Our education, both professional and academic, has long ago lost the traditional rigors of classical curriculums and apprenticeships, leaving us to fend for ourselves. Although this lack of structure may in part foster our trademark creativity, it also contributes to our poor track record in business matters. I have found practice to be the exact opposite of my schooling, when design was considered as much process as product. The process is, in fact, pure business — a kind of political fund-raising for a vision — and requires the same equipment and skills as any other professional pursuit.

So should I blame my teachers and employers for failing to educate me on money matters? Not at all. Like an infant who eventually learns not to touch hot things, I get the point, albeit a few scars later. On the issue of whether to accept recognition or cash, my education says to take both.

Michael Yusem, Assoc. AIA

In Michael Buckley's world, architects are implicitly criticized for possessing the very abilities that constitute their professional expertise. This includes the ability to articulate spatial and formal ideas visually, and to think analytically and expansively about issues at play in the constructed landscape. Buckley harbors a suspicion that architects are deceitful manipulators of the image, who are somehow protected and insulated from reality. It's an old accusation, a rehashing of characterizations first made by Plato.

Architects, who work mainly through proxies such as drawings and models, could be included in Plato's "imitative tribe" of artists and poets. In Book X of *The Republic*, Plato considered whether the artist and poet legitimately have rights to be included within his ideal state. Inclusion in the Republic today might be akin to "having a seat at the table," the stock metaphor deployed to invoke the site of negotiation and decision-making in capitalist society, where, in less politically correct times, the "big boys" were reputed to have sat. To rate a seat, knowledge of "reality" is a prerequisite; one must not be swayed by the power of the image or mistake its effect for that which "really" is true — that is, the power of profit. Pitted against the truth found in calculation and rationality (today's correspondent being the bottom line and financial sophistication), the poet/artist was found by Plato to be woefully insufficient in real-world knowledge, unlike the maker, who at least had knowledge of fabrication, or the user, who had the greatest authority to determine what was good or bad, through application and use. In Plato's world, the idea of a thing — its form — was divine in origin, which meant that the artist was merely reproducing a likeness of something uniquely authentic. In Buckley's world, absent divine generation, where would the form of the built environment come from? By disparaging architects' mastery of representation and its rhetoric, Buckley fails to understand that the speculative abilities and talents of architects have as much currency in creating value in the built environment as the speculative risks taken by developers.

Laura Miller

I don't know where to begin to respond to Michael Buckley. He starts with the assertion that architects are poor at business — due in part to the lack of practical training during their architectural education — and ends with the premise that the "cult designer's currency" is ego-stroking of various forms. One of his few statements with which I agree is: "The average architectural graduate has a threshold salary well below any other rigorously paid professional." However, I disagree with the author's explanation. I don't think our society appreciates the time and effort it takes to produce a good design. I also believe that attitudes similar to Mr. Buckley's help promulgate the misconception that architects don't need or want appropriate monetary remuneration because of some intangible "designer's currency."

To the extent that there are other rewards or intangible "currency," I do not agree with the list Mr. Buckley presents. For me, the primary reward, other than financial, is the satisfaction of shepherding a project from conception through codes, clients, budgets, and contractors to completion. Maybe it is an ego trip when clients or building occupants tell you, long after the project is occupied, how much they enjoy working/living/being in the space you designed. That is a satisfaction that is not self-serving, as Mr. Buckley suggests, but that comes from serving others.

Lynne Brooks AIA

Propaganda, to be swallowed, must contain some morsels of truth. Mr. Buckley's portrayal of the architect was propaganda in 1985 and is even more virulent propaganda today.

His morsels are: design is at the core of what architects do; at large firms, entry-level architects get one-quarter to one-third of the salary that new lawyers do; as in the rest of society, some architects have large egos; as in most fields, architects have their own language that leaves the uninitiated cold. I recall the criticism in graduate school that a jury discussion occasionally reached a level so esoteric that "only bats could hear it." The nature of human development seems to be that we talk the talk before we walk the walk.

Now, thanks to Mr. Buckley, whenever I meet a real estate developer, I'll think that smile is somehow pitying.

Mr. Buckley's propaganda masks a more sinister phenomenon for architects and developers — and the rest of our society — which is that we are now ruled solely by money and speed. Nothing seems to have lasting value. Things have value only until the next new thing appears. The built environment that used to be the support and context of our public life is now a coast-to-coast advertisement (or infomercial) for money — who has it, where to get it, how to spend it — connected by roads and parking.

The focus on money and speed has led real estate developers to regard the built environment as a commodity. The money-and-speed mentality changes the priorities for evaluating architects: the ability to get a design through the political and public approval process; the ability to design (and redesign) rapidly; the ability to heed and even anticipate client directives.

This situation will only get worse until each new project is an authentic exploration of how to make the world we've inherited a better place to live, work, and play together.

John Wilson FAIA

Share of market

Financial performance

Prestige and image

Michael Buckley's description of the values and pursuits of the cult architect feels not only dated, but also foreign and strange. His list of the architect's hoped-for accomplishments, if it is to be believed, paints a portrait of a soulless profession. He also implies that there are primarily two value systems in the world of real estate development: the financial motivations of developers and the ego motivations of architects. I'd like to suggest that there is another system.

For the past 15 years, I have practiced another kind of architecture with The Narrow Gate, a firm that provides services to developers of affordable housing, supportive housing, and other community-based projects. Our clients are non-profit organizations working in Greater Boston's neighborhoods. Together with my partners Bob Wegener and Neal Mongold, we have found satisfaction in specializing in a field that others may consider not "worth" specializing in.

The currency of The Narrow Gate has always been rooted in using our architectural skills in a spiritually meaningful way. Our rewards can be found in working in long-standing relationships with caring and committed clients to serve people who are frequently on the fringes of a prosperous society. In the 15 years since we started The Narrow Gate, we have found a joyful and satisfying sense of purpose: a currency richer than we ever imagined.

It's also a great gift to work with partners who are friends and who share similar beliefs. The struggle is to balance work, family, and time off while keeping an eye on a sustainable livelihood for both our dedicated staff and ourselves. We've accomplished much in these years — we have even given financial issues their due attention! — but it is the currency of service to those in need that guides us.

Kitty Ryan

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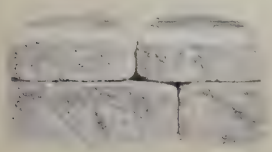

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Today, nearly two-thirds of the nation's metropolitan population lives and works in suburbs.

photos © Alex MacLean / Landslides

Money, Cities, and Suburbanization

by Oliver Gillham AIA

In the last half-century, a vast change has been wrought in US urban patterns. In 1950, most metropolitan Americans lived and worked in dense, crowded cities like New York and Philadelphia. Today, nearly two-thirds of metropolitan America lives and works in spread-out suburbs that look like Los Angeles or Houston, and single-family detached housing (i.e., suburban housing) comprises more square feet of floor space in the nation than all other building types combined. At the dawn of the new century, America is building suburbs, not cities.

How did all this happen in merely 50 years? A significant part of the answer has to do with money and how money has been influenced by government policy. While it is fashionable to blame suburban sprawl on land-use regulations such as zoning, the truth is that the world might well look very much the way it does even if those regulations and policies did not exist. For example, it is well known that Houston, Texas, has no zoning. In theory, Houston could have made itself into Manhattan or Colonial Williamsburg, or even a medieval Italian hill town, but that's not the way it turned out. Even without zoning, Houston exhibits the sprawling suburban characteristics of many other US metropolitan areas.

To some degree, Houston makes up for its lack of zoning with other by-laws and ordinances as well as a host of special covenants and deed restrictions. But it is *money* — in the form of real estate markets, financing requirements, and infrastructure investments — that determined most of what has happened there, as in most of America's metropolitan areas. To demonstrate this point one need only look at just one of the ingredients of today's vast suburban world — the one that comprises the majority of America's built environment: housing.

Building Suburbia

Today, almost all Americans buy their homes using mortgages. Yet, before the 1930s there was essentially no such thing as a long-term self-amortizing residential mortgage in the United States. The financing that did exist only covered about 50 percent of the cost of a house. Furthermore, these loans were available for periods of only five to ten years, and no principal was paid off during that time. Only interest payments were made, with the entire loan principal plus any remaining interest due in a "balloon payment" at the end of the mortgage. As a result, by 1933, in the depths of the Great Depression, mortgage foreclosures had reached over a thousand per day, and the home financing system was in ruins.

Much was changed with the creation of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) in 1934. The FHA did not directly build any houses or provide any financing. Instead, it insured long-term loans made by private-sector banks for home-buying and housing construction. The FHA also mandated an extension of the loan period for up to 30 years, reduced down payments to 10 percent, and required that the mortgages it guaranteed were fully self-amortizing. This meant that interest charges and a portion of the principal were paid off with each loan payment, eliminating the huge balloon payments at the end of the loan. Augmented at the end of World War II by the passage of the GI Bill, which established Veteran's Administration (VA) loans, the FHA popularized the home mortgage as we know it today.

The FHA also helped to create the suburban landscape as we know it today, through the "strings" that came along with the federal guarantee of the loans. From the start, the FHA's loan terms, rating systems, and underwriting criteria generally favored single-family homes in white, middle-class subdivisions, while discouraging apartment projects. During the 1950s, FHA-insured loans for single-family housing exceeded FHA-insured loans for multi-family housing by a ratio of seven to one. Published guidelines specifically cautioned against densely populated, older neighborhoods — in other words, most urban areas.

The FHA also set minimum standards for new housing construction that essentially ruled out non-suburban projects. These minimum requirements included lot size, setbacks, and the overall width of the house. In addition, FHA publications standardized subdivision design: wide streets with homes set far back on large lots were labeled as "Good," while traditional pedestrian-scaled neighborhoods were labeled as "Bad." The FHA went even further, expressing a preference for traditional styles, especially "New England colonial" architecture. Thus Colonial Revival architecture has been spread across the country from Maine to California and from Minnesota to Florida, regardless of any pre-existing regional styles. Today it can be hard to distinguish neighborhoods in Texas and Georgia from those in Connecticut or Massachusetts.

Of course, much has changed since the origins of the FHA. Among other things, anti-discrimination laws have taken effect, and now mortgages also cover condominiums in the city. But financing still comes with strings attached — for all building types. The banks and insurance companies that lend money for many suburban commercial and residential projects dictate size, uses, the number of parking spaces, mechanical systems, and even the materials to be used in construction. Lenders want to be sure they have a marketable commodity in case they end up owning the project, and "marketable" usually means something that has been successfully sold across the country.

Thus, in order to finance, build, and sell their real estate products, developers in places like Houston have had to follow many rules established elsewhere — just as if they had been built according to rigorous zoning standards. "Successful" models have become inculcated in the development process, making their own set of private building regulations.

Perpetuating Suburbia

Once suburbs are built, it takes a distinctive fiscal pattern to keep them growing. In most communities, residential development is almost always a municipal money loser. More public money is spent on education and other services needed to support residential neighborhoods than comes back from them in revenue. The situation is made more acute by the limitations on taxing power placed on municipalities by state legislatures and the electorate.

Because commercial development can help pay the school bill — normally the largest share of the local tax bill — it has become a sought-after prize in many communities. In the longer term, however, the same treasured commercial development can also lead to higher costs. Commercial projects create jobs. New jobs create a demand for new housing nearby, and new housing requires more subsidy from the community. This leads some communities to seek even more commercial investment to pay off the costs of all the new housing following the last round of commercial development. Some communities actually promise incentives like new roads or tax breaks, further eroding any gains they might have made.

When considered at the regional level, the problem is compounded as commercial building in one community can result in a residential explosion in a neighboring jurisdiction, with no offsetting tax gain. Commercial "growth" can itself be deceiving: in some cases, it may actually represent regional displacement as corporate headquarters and other businesses leave center-city locations for suburban sites in the same metropolitan area. The center city loses a source of tax revenue and employment, while the suburbs gain new infrastructure and education burdens.

Retail development in the form of malls can produce similar results. A community may literally give away the store for the tax revenues from a new regional mall. However, once built, a mall can cause downtown stores for miles around to close their doors, in some cases even putting older suburban malls out of business, and thus damaging the tax base of surrounding communities.

photos © Alex MacLean / Landslides

The Invisible Hand

Like Adam Smith's "invisible hand," the requirements of money and finance are among the most powerful forces creating the suburban world that American cities have become in the new century. The financing of housing and highways helped create the modern suburban metropolis, while contemporary fiscal policies perpetuate it. Although designers have become sophisticated about the aesthetic aspects of the sprawl debate, the fundamental problems of suburbanization cannot be solved without addressing the underlying financial aspects. ■■■

Oliver Gillham AIA is an architect and planner based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He is the author of *The Limitless City: A Primer on the Urban Sprawl Debate* (Island Press, 2002) from which this article is adapted. For more information see: www.limitlesscity.com

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In many cases, new suburban development does not represent regional growth but regional displacement, as investments in suburbs parallel disinvestments in cities.

Architecture and the Pro-Forma

by Willy Sclarsic AIA

Architects have a secure and significant place in the financial analysis of new buildings. Architecture does not.

Architectural services, by law or by necessity, are a requirement of contemporary financing formats. Bankers, lenders, underwriters, appraisers, and investors measure the risk associated with new construction projects by comparing the proposed projects with similar successful existing buildings. In order to predict the success of proposed projects, financial analysts and appraisers evaluate a variety of factors including: location; transportation access; local occupancy rates; operating costs; debt-service cover ratios; proposed rents versus market rents. These factors are incorporated in the "pro-forma" of proposed projects — the mathematical analysis that demonstrates financial viability. One of the factors considered is the conformity of the project's design with comparable successful properties. Architecture, defined for the purposes of this discussion as the costs of design beyond basic utilitarian requirements, is rarely valued as a factor of contemporary pro-formas. The underwriting process discourages innovation; "different" architecture is considered an unmanageable risk to be avoided and can even result in the denial of a financing application. Only private or institutional owners who are so motivated can take the financial risk of sponsoring innovative architecture. When compounded by an "architecturally correct" regulatory design-review process, the lack of support by building owners for innovative architecture is understandable.

Why was architecture necessary in the pro-forma?

Historically, buildings were built first to solve utilitarian needs, but their architecture was often used for allegorical expression. The architecture was necessary to express social status, ecclesiastical spirituality, aristocratic authority, municipal prestige, or corporate power. Architecture may have been unnecessary for the program, but it was required for the allegory. Architecture transformed a shrine into a temple, a meeting hall into a cathedral, a house into a palace. Architecture was an inalienable component of the financial pro-forma of new buildings.

A medieval cathedral offers a good example of this relationship. It was more than a large public hall designed to keep the congregation out of the rain. The Bishop and Chapter, although constrained by limited financial resources, intended not just to build a major structure, but also to demand from their architect an aggressive new design that would surpass that of prior buildings. There were both religious and economic reasons for this demand, but *architecture was critical to the purpose of the building.* The additional cost of architecture was therefore an acceptable part of the pro-forma. The consistent demand from architectural patrons for new architectural expression historically stimulated the evolution of architecture and architectural styles.

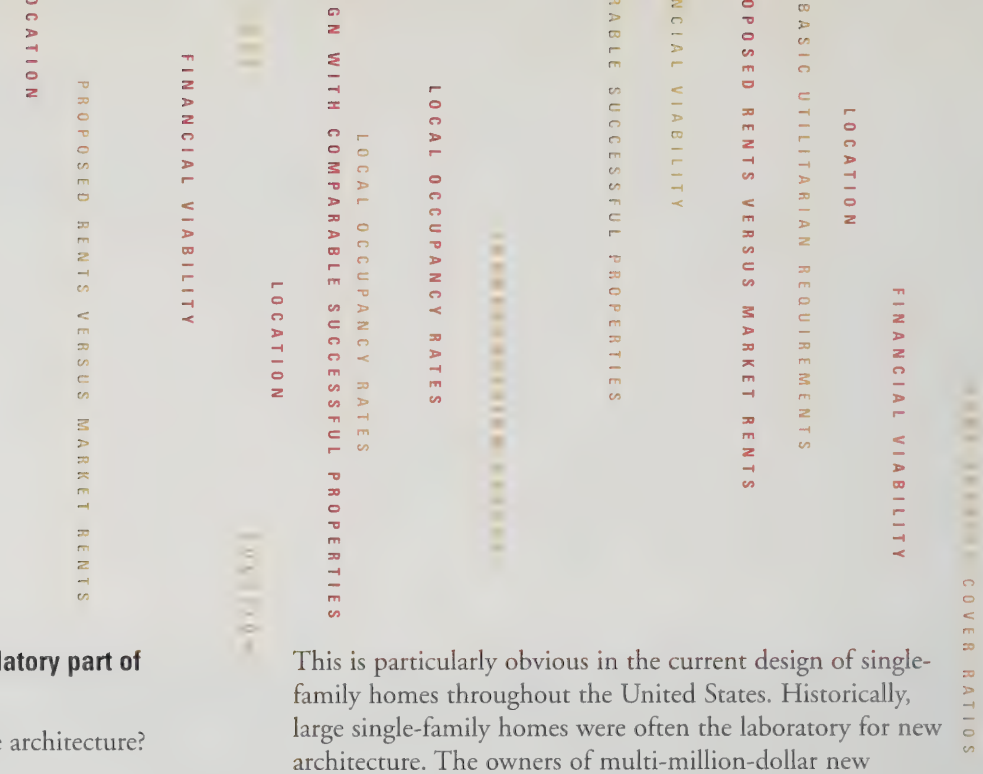
When was architecture excluded from the pro-forma?

In the early 20th century, historic architectural styles such as Greco-Roman, Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, and Neo-all-of-the-above were rejected by avant-garde architects. In *Towards a New Architecture* (1927), Le Corbusier stated that "styles no longer exist for us," but, more significantly, he also wrote, "...we no longer have the money to erect historical souvenirs." As early as the 1920s, the financial underwriting of new buildings was already having difficulty paying for the expenses of architectural ornamentation. Although the International Style was promoting entirely different aesthetic and theoretical ideals, its relatively less ornate and less expensive construction attracted the cost-conscious real estate industry.

Why did many clients exclude architecture from the pro-forma?

After World War II, the recovery effort demanded reconstruction overseas and new construction in the United States. National economies, however, were also recovering from the impacts of the war and could no longer finance the costs of prewar architectural styles. The academic acceptability of the International Style and associated Modern Movement, as well as their affordability, facilitated the introduction of a new aesthetic for postwar buildings.

This new aesthetic, free from classical architectural vocabulary, was responsive to financial reality. Although there were many notable exceptions, a generation of postwar buildings was built with little, if any, architecture by misapplying the fundamental principles of the International Style. These often unimaginative and monotonous buildings nevertheless performed well financially. During the second half of the 20th century, as a more diversified scope of program-related services was required from architects, their clients demanded less architecture.



Architecture was no longer a mandatory part of the pro-forma.

Why don't clients support innovative architecture?

Contemporary building owners want their new buildings to be well-crafted, efficient, and reliable. If their new buildings can be more attractive than their neighbors' or competitors' buildings, so much the better, as long as the design remains within the bounds of cultural correctness. Most speculative-building owners, as well as many municipal, institutional, and corporate clients, are not in business to promote or sponsor new advances in architectural design. Their buildings are intended to solve operational requirements, to operate institutions or businesses, or to make a profit. Innovative architecture rarely enhances the profitability of current projects. Building tenants and users are attracted to new buildings for many reasons beyond utilitarian purpose, including location, access, amenities, views, opulent décor, scale, and prestige. Tenants and users may demand some or all of these, but they rarely demand cutting-edge architecture.

Real estate developers are sensitive to market demands, and institutional owners are sensitive to the demands of their occupants. If either perceived a demand for innovative architecture that also improved marketability, profitability, or performance, they would provide it.

Why don't building users demand innovative architecture?

Few architects understand or acknowledge the disconnection between contemporary architectural design and popular taste. Just as the general public finds modern painting, new symphonic music, and contemporary sculpture completely incomprehensible, architectural consumers rarely appreciate contemporary architectural design. There is a great deal more popular affection and nostalgia for 19th-century buildings than there is for 20th-century buildings.

This is particularly obvious in the current design of single-family homes throughout the United States. Historically, large single-family homes were often the laboratory for new architecture. The owners of multi-million-dollar new houses today rarely demand avant-garde architecture. They routinely request comfortable and familiar historical architectural styles in regional vocabularies. The same trend became more evident in the design of commercial and institutional buildings in the past decades. This re-use of classical architectural vocabulary may have been a hesitant attempt to reconnect architectural designs with popular taste. If the 20th century began by looking toward a new architecture, it ended by looking toward an old architecture.

How can architecture re-enter the pro-forma?

In order to re-introduce the value of architecture in future financial pro-formas, architects will need to create a new 21st-century architecture so appealing to building users and owners that they will demand its inclusion in new buildings and agree to pay for its costs. This is an optimistic proposition, but failure to reconnect architecture with public taste and to re-establish a strong demand for architecture from building users will further discourage the re-introduction of architecture in future financial pro-formas.

The consequence may be that, for most architects, future architectural practice will consist of fundamentally technical professional services, and only a few elite practitioners will practice the Art of architecture. ■■■

Willy Sclarsic AIA is senior vice president of Wingate Development Corp., which provides real estate development services within Continental Wingate Company (CWC) and its affiliates. CWC is a national company that is involved in real estate financial services and lending, housing, commercial office space, property management, and healthcare. He is also president of Wingate Real Estate Strategies; a CWC subsidiary that provides real estate development expertise and project management to companies not affiliated with Continental Wingate Company. Sclarsic co-chairs the BSA Housing Committee.

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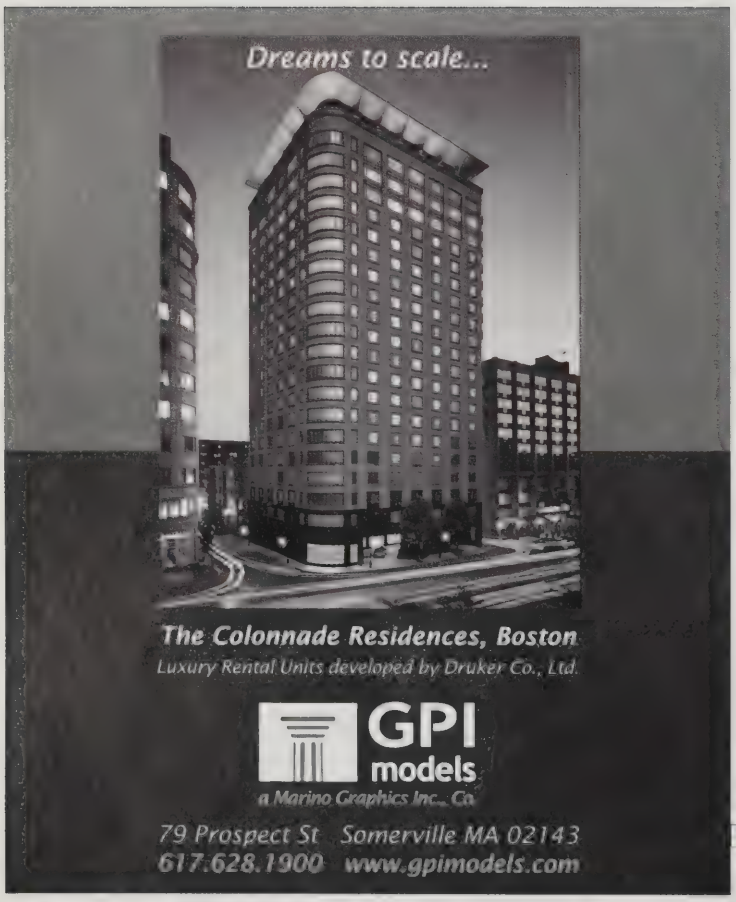

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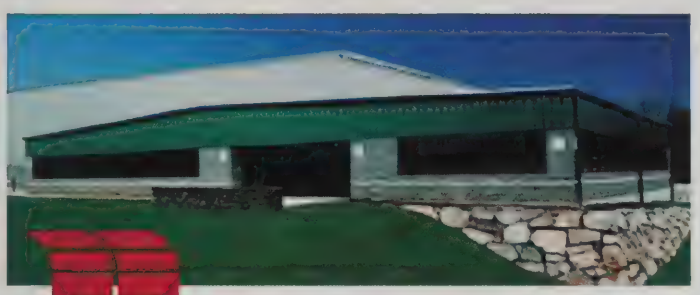

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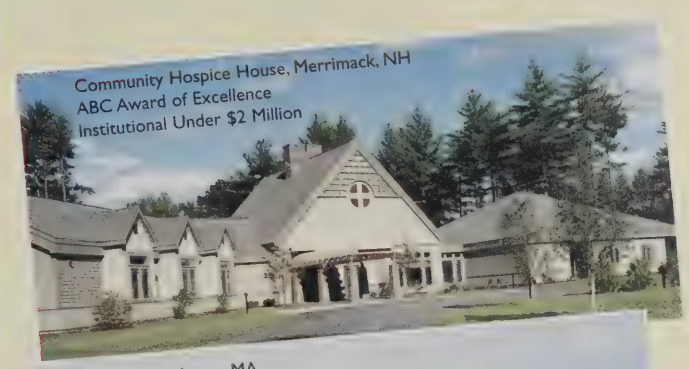
Community Hospice House, Merrimack, NH
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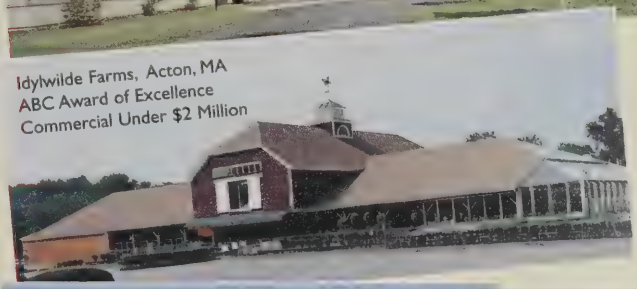
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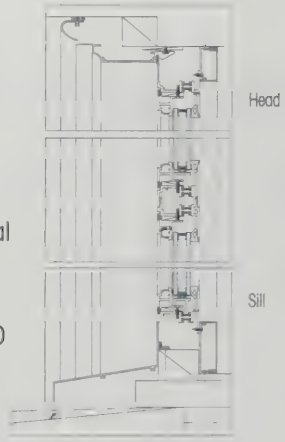

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Samuel Mockbee and an Architecture of Decency

by James McCown

photo Timothy Hursley

All photos from *Rural Studio: Samuel Mockbee and an Architecture of Decency* by Andrea Oppenheimer Dean and Timothy Hursley

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Above: Samuel Mockbee in Newbern, Alabama

Given at the twilight of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address was supposed to be a rousing screed about an imminent Union victory, taunting the vanquished rebels and celebrating the North's military prowess. Instead, it was a sermon — soulful, contemplative, warning of the dangers of pride and malice. He alluded to slavery ("the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil") and to the price that might be exacted from a country that had allowed it to exist for so long ("every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword"). In this spirit of self-examination, Alabama architect Samuel Mockbee FAIA hit on the idea, a century and a quarter later, of harnessing the talent and enthusiasm of young architects to build housing and community facilities in one of the poorest counties in the Deep South. In so doing, he may have come close to living up to Lincoln's closing exhortation to "strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds." Mockbee's death in December 2001 at age 57 cut short a life with so much work yet to be done.

I am a sixth-generation Alabamian, with deep roots in a region called the Black Belt, so named because of its dark, fertile topsoil. When I was growing up, my grandmother entertained us with tales of a childhood spent in large white houses with wide breezy porches, of ancestors' illustrious Civil War adventures, of steamboats that hauled baled-up cotton down the Chattahoochee River. Our elders conveniently ignored the untidier elements of our past — the fetid "negro quarters" of small towns, the intolerable hours and low pay of household help, the subtle threat of violence that shadowed blacks for much of the 20th century. We went along with this fairy-tale aristocracy, one never quite as grand — and certainly not as benevolent — as Mitchell and Selznick had presented it.

photos Timothy Hursley

The Black Belt is also home to Hale County, where Mockbee brought the Auburn University students in his Rural Studio over the course of a decade. Hale County was one of the losers in the geographic and political sweepstakes of the 1950s and 1960s that decided where the interstate highways would go. Now, isolated, unappealing to industry, and no longer able to count on the past's agrarian bounty, Hale gets by, just barely. Old landed families revel in memories, while those of African descent do as they have for two centuries — work hard, watch the world from their small porches, sing praises to a seemingly distant God.

As a design teacher, Mockbee emphasized the local and the spontaneous, the used and the useful. Has there ever been a more perfect indigenous material than the orange/red rammed-earth walls of the Mason's Bend Community Center? Has there ever been a more effective evocation of the wide Southern front porch than in the Bryant Hay Bale House?

"If you seek his monument, look about you," reads the epitaph for Christopher Wren. So it is with Mockbee. One senses that Mockbee would be uncomfortable with all of the adulation occasioned by his death, all of the eulogies from, as my grandmother would say, "fancy Yankees" — *The New York Times*, the American Institute of Architects, the architecture magazines, and now Princeton Architectural Press, whose new volume *Rural Studio* is at once a poignant memento mori and a celebration. For at its core, Mockbee's Rural Studio was about one man's love of a place, a green, flat place of dirt roads and patches of kudzu that look like giant bears, where it's hot as hell in summer and rains most of the time, where there's not much to do but work and talk and sit on your porch and ask, "How's your momma doin'?" and really mean it.

In this place, as a result of Mockbee's tutelage, the visually poetic eclipses the tragic. And still keeps that rain out. ■■■

James McCown is a freelance writer in Cambridge, Massachusetts

Bryant House, 1994
cost: $15,000
(plus donated labor and materials)

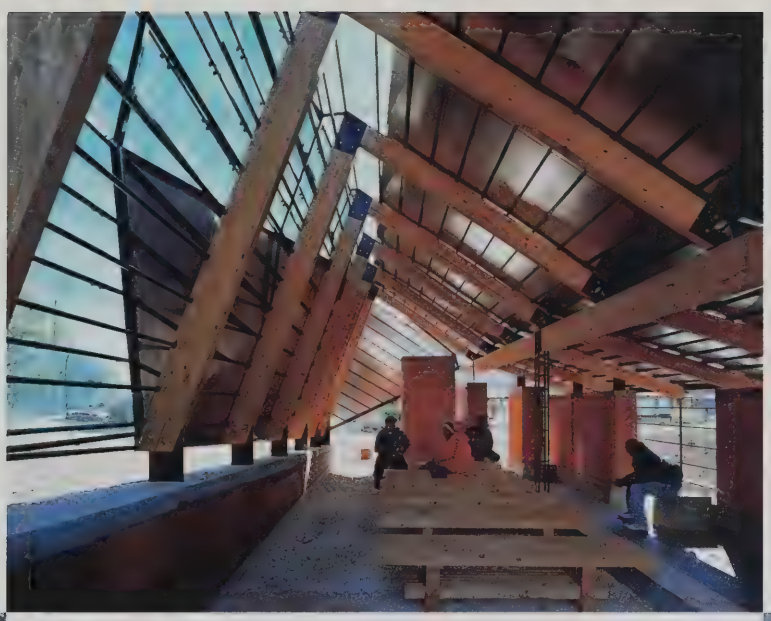
"The goal is not to have a warm, dry house, but to have a warm, dry house with a spirit to it."
Samuel Mockbee

Far left:
Shepard Bryant in the doorway of his smokehouse, designed and built by graduate student Scott Stafford.

Left:
Bedrooms for the grandchildren are provided in three barrel-vaulted structures.

Below:
The porch runs the length of the main house, the walls of which are made of 80 lb. bales of hay wrapped in polyurethane and covered with stucco; smokehouse in foreground.

Samuel Mockbee and an Architecture of Decency



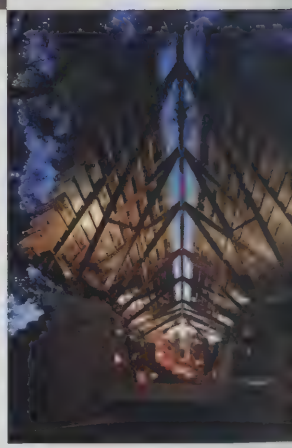
Mason's Bend Community Center, 1994
cost: $20,000 (plus donated labor and materials)

"...a windshield chapel with mud walls that picks up on the community's vernacular forms and shapes."
Samuel Mockbee

Left:
The main façade is made of 80 recycled Chevrolet Caprice windshields bought for $120.

Top:
The building, an open-air pavilion, is used as both a community gathering place and as a chapel.

Center and bottom:
The red-orange walls are made of rammed earth — a mixture of local clay, sand, and portland cement.



Yancey Chapel, 1995
cost: $15,000
(plus donated labor and materials)

"The best way to make real architecture is by letting a building evolve out of the culture and place."
Samuel Mockbee

Far left and center:
Walls are constructed with used automobile tires reinforced with re-bars, filled with soil, and then covered with stucco.

Left, bottom:
Candles provide additional light — and mystery — in the open-air structure.

Above:
Scavenged materials include floor slates quarried from a local creek by the students, heavy timbers from an abandoned building, and rusted roof shingles made of "...thrown-away tin from old barns and stuff."

Rural Studio: Samuel Mockbee and an Architecture of Decency

Text by Andrea Oppenheimer Dean
Photos by Timothy Hursley

Princeton Architectural Press, 2002

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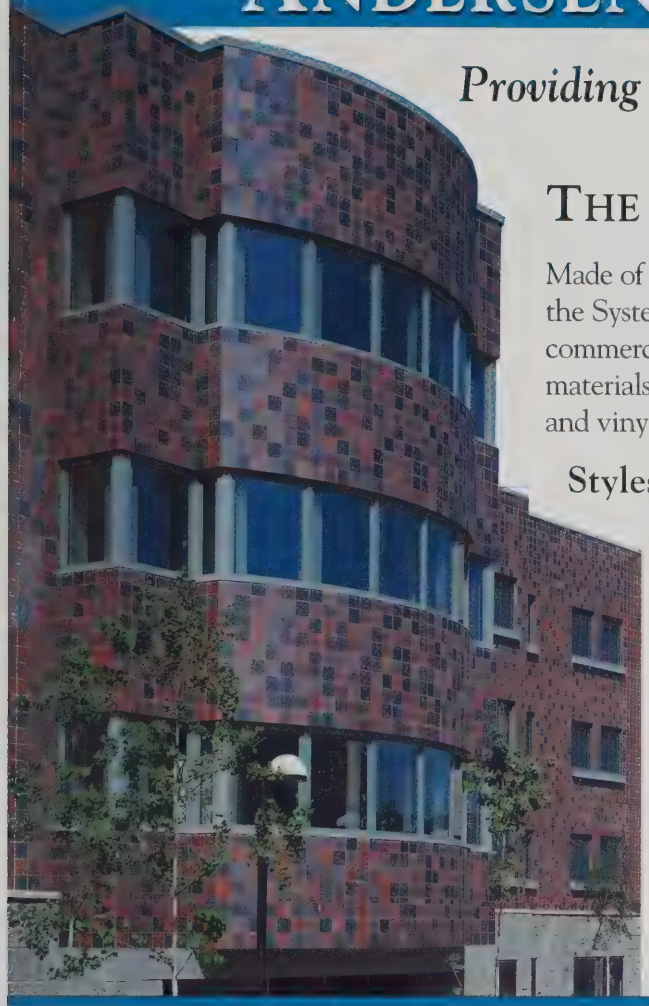

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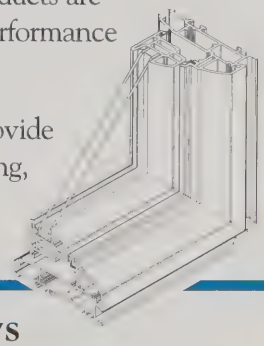

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Money Talks:
Learning the language of finance

by Scott Simpson FAIA

Many generations of architects have been nurtured on the notion that form follows function. This is true enough, but it should also be noted that form follows finance. As much as steel, glass, and concrete, money has always been an essential ingredient in the making of architecture. Great public buildings, going back to the Roman Forum and Coliseum, were financed by public taxes. The cathedrals of Europe owe their existence to tithing by the faithful. Corporate profits produced such landmarks as the Citicorp tower in New York and the Transamerica tower in San Francisco. Wealthy private patrons have created many notable works of architecture, from the Kimbell Art Museum to Fallingwater. None of this would have been possible without money, and lots of it. Indeed, the design process must respond to many influences that transcend aesthetics, such as time, technology, and politics. At every step, there is the issue of finance — how to pay for it all.

It's a curious irony that most architects shy away from this essential truth. They aren't taught to understand or talk about money, much less use it as a design tool. Most are notably woeful cost estimators who can barely read a corporate balance sheet. Yet, money is the *lingua franca* of the client world. To do great design — to get the best results for the resources available — it's important that clients and architects speak a common language. Not surprisingly, clients, who are fluent in the language of finance, would much rather deal with architects who can count than starry-eyed garret-dwellers who can barely balance a checkbook. Still, many architects studiously avoid the subject for fear that it might somehow taint the "purity" of the design process. This is a little like a chef who avoids all use of butter.

Indeed, fiduciary responsibility is an essential part of any architect's job. Standard AIA contract documents require the architect to keep the owner informed of the probable cost of the project, to evaluate the impact of change orders, and to certify that payments to the contractor are correct. Architects must also make impartial decisions about the performance of both the owner and the contractor during construction. Failure to properly execute such responsibilities can have significant financial and legal consequences. Owing to such debacles as the savings-and-loan crisis and the collapse of Enron, we have been made painfully aware how important it is for professionals such as lawyers and accountants to maintain the highest professional

and ethical standards. The same holds true for architects, yet there are very few, if any, academic courses in financial management offered to design students. As society demands more accountability (in the literal sense), will architects be prepared to respond? Will they be able — and eager — to give their clients the advice that they need to make the right decisions?

If architects are to overcome their chronic complaints that fees aren't high enough to cover costs or that additional services are rarely recognized and compensated properly, then they must be able to communicate the value of what they do in terms that owners can understand and appreciate. This means becoming fluent in the language of money. Indeed, architects need to learn that running a profitable firm is the best way — and in fact the only way — to create top-quality design. A firm which is not financially healthy will be too distracted to focus on its core mission of delivering the "goods" for its clients. It's time that we learned that good design and good business not only go together, but they are also inseparable. To do great design, it's necessary to hire the best staff, get the best equipment, and provide great workspace — and none of this is free.

Clients are real people, and they appreciate the value of a dollar. Good clients — the kind that every architect wants — know how to spend their money wisely (that's how they got rich enough to become clients in the first place). Good architects — the kind that every client wants — know how to produce the very best results given the resources at hand. Trouble starts if there's a disconnect between clients' aspirations and the depth of their pockets, or if the architect regards the budget merely as a suggestion rather than a parameter to be respected. While architects may bemoan a tight budget or a tight fee, the fact is that clients understand money very well indeed. Bottom line (so to speak), they're looking for value. Smart clients know what they want and they have the ability to pay for it — what they're looking for is help from the architect in translating their dreams into reality.

The good news is that design, by its nature, is very much a value-added proposition. New buildings can generate revenue in the form of rental income, and they can also generate real savings by using less energy. New space allows firms to expand their operations, adding to the bottom line. New ways of organizing people and work processes make it possible for clients to operate with substantially greater efficiency, enabling them to produce more with less. Even aesthetics — that most non-objective and ethereal of subjects — can be economically beneficial. Noteworthy design attracts more people, can generate more revenue or sales, and hence justifies higher rents. What architects need to do is to find the words to explain this value creation to their clients, for when they do, savvy clients will gladly pay the fees. Who wouldn't invest a dollar to get ten in return? By designing buildings that take clever advantage of the allowable zoning envelope; by devising floor plans that increase efficiency, occupancy, and interaction among staff; or by creating spaces that attract new people and new business, architects can add substantially to their clients' bottom lines.

The value inherent in good design is worth many times more than the cost of the fees involved. Indeed, buildings should be seen as profit centers, not cost centers. The problem is that most architects can't find the words to explain this to their clients. They need to be able to communicate clearly and convincingly that the lines of a drawing are intimately connected to the client's bottom line. They need to embrace rather than shy away from the financial and fiduciary responsibilities that go with the job. They need to understand financial statements, annual reports, and 10-K forms. In short, they need to be fluent in the language of money.

The dimensions of good design are many and subtle, and therefore often difficult to articulate. Unlike manufacturing, design is not always predictable — it's a process of exploration and creation. But this should not stop us from talking about real, measurable, quantifiable value. Architects are in a unique position to create value for their clients by creatively interweaving design, technology, time, politics, and economics. This has always been the case, but is rarely explained. Form follows function, to be sure, but that is only part of the story. When architects find the words to explain the value proposition inherent in every single project, they will change how they are viewed by the client world. Even more importantly, they will change how they view themselves. ■■■

Scott Simpson FAIA is a principal of The Stubbins Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and a member of the board of directors of the American Institute of Architects.

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Honor and Glory:
The profession and business of architecture

Victoria Beach AIA
talks with Jeffrey Stein AIA

VICTORIA BEACH AIA
is the principal of Beach Design and a lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, where she teaches architectural ethics, design, and community design studio-workshops. She is also the director of Design Foundations, a program that links design interns with community-service design projects. Co-chair of the Boston Society of Architects Ethics Forum, she was a 2000 Faculty Fellow at Harvard's Center for Ethics and the Professions.

JEFFREY STEIN AIA
is the architecture critic for *Banker + Tradesman* and professor of architecture at Wentworth Institute of Technology. He recently served as commissioner of education for the Boston Society of Architects and is a frequent contributor to *ArchitectureBoston*.

STEIN You've spent the last few years teaching and thinking about professional ethics, which often comes down to the relationship between money and the practice of architecture. How is that relationship different now from what it was in the past?

BEACH Architecture and money have always been partners, but it used to be that only clients were expected to have money. Architects were the patronized artists or professionals serving them. The difference now is that architecture has become much more viable as a business, and there is money in being an architect.

STEIN Was there a particular moment in time when that change occurred?

BEACH I'd say that things started to change around the turn of the 20th century, with the professionalization of the discipline. Professionalization brought licensure — in effect, a monopoly privilege to practice, which opens up avenues for making money. It also opens up questions of professional ethics around the pursuit of money. I think it's important for architects to remember that they do not have licensed monopoly privileges to practice because they're in business. If business were their primary purpose, the government would not protect them. Architects are protected because the government expects that they will serve society in some way. An architect who treats the profession primarily like a business is not playing fair. I would even say it's unethical.

That's the social-contract point of view. Another way to look at it is from the point of view of the professionals themselves. One school in professional ethics today says that one of the wonderful things about being a professional is that it's a rewarding station in life. It's a view that goes back to Aristotle, who was a "virtue ethicist." Virtue ethics means that the reason to be ethical is that it makes you a better person, and being a good person is a great thing to be in life. So you might say that if you want to have a virtuous and rewarding life, one way to do it is to be a professional. That's unfortunately an endangered view of professional life.

STEIN I agree — it's definitely an endangered view. But why do you think that's happened?

B E A C H The primary danger comes from commercial pressures to run a professional office exclusively like a business with little or no resources devoted to advocacy for the non-paying public or for good design itself. That's part of it. Another part is that architects are in the building industry, and we derive a lot of our practices from contractors. For example, we have contracts with our clients. That is different from other professionals such as lawyers, who have voluntary, advisory relationships with their clients.

During the development of architecture as a profession, a decision was made to lay out the expected project tasks in contractual terms. We were project-oriented to begin with, and we were expected to predict the services and work that would be necessary to complete a project to the client's satisfaction. Doctors, lawyers, and other professionals seem to have escaped the contractual relationship. It's not a mandatory part of their service as much as it is for us.

S T E I N There seems to be much more discussion of ethical issues now than there once was. Are we more aware of the consequences of societal ethics, the consequences of what we do? Or are there simply many more consequences than there used to be?

B E A C H You can look at that in terms of the duties we have by virtue of being professionals. Those duties are usually categorized by the beneficiaries, that is, whom or what they are duties *to*. The "who" would be the public, your client, and your colleagues. The "what" might be the knowledge base of the profession. Architects have always had to be on top of that; their duty has always been to be leaders in forwarding structural, technical, and legal advances, including issues such as accessibility. That duty has become much more complex, there's no question. You would have had to master other, maybe less complex, things in an earlier age, but that doesn't mean that the essential duty to be on top of these issues is any different. And that's a point that is recognized in the AIA code of ethics. You must be upfront about what you know and work to the level of your experience. But in the meantime, you must contribute to the body of knowledge.

S T E I N So how does the business of architecture — the business of running a firm and meeting payroll and generating profits — support that duty? Can it? Or does it sometimes push duty aside?

B E A C H It often does push duty aside. I wouldn't say that most practices are devoted to pushing the bounds of architectural knowledge. It's expensive to do that, and research-and-development is a category of expenditure in architecture firms that is very small, if it exists at all.

S T E I N Architects don't imagine that there is a return on that investment dollar.

B E A C H No. There's no immediate profit in it. The ultimate beneficiary is the field of architecture, your clients, the public, or your colleagues. But the fact that it's going to cost you money does not mean that it's not a duty.

S T E I N How are other professions dealing with these issues?

B E A C H The practice of medicine has certainly swung far over to being a business — doctors can no longer always put their patients first. I think most doctors today feel divorced from the opportunity to heal through practicing medicine. Of course, practicing medicine is very different from producing a design for a home or office, but the problems of the medical profession could very well be visited on architects if we're not careful.

S T E I N How do we avoid that?

B E A C H By putting design first, putting duties to our clients first, putting service to our community first — before our own financial interests.

S T E I N Are developers to architects as insurance companies are to doctors? If I go to a doctor and I have health insurance, I'm not really concerned about how much the doctor's fee is because some third party pays it for. And similarly, if I need a place to live and rent an apartment, I'm not concerned about the architect's fee — a developer has already paid it.

Cambridge Seven Associates, Inc. / photo: Steve Rosenthal

The interesting thing about architecture is that it has many beneficiaries who don't pay. I'm a beneficiary of H.H. Richardson's Trinity Church, but I didn't have anything to do with Richardson's fee.

B E A C H Architecture is perhaps the most egregious example of the separation between the user or beneficiary of services and the payer. The payer is often someone who built the house before you bought it or the king who built the public gardens. There have always been many more users than payers.

S T E I N In the past, a royal client considered all the other users through future generations, people who might stroll by a building or visit a city. It's hardly a tradition that drives most building projects these days.

B E A C H Clients today do not have the same altruistic motives that we ascribe to a public-private entity like a monarchy. In a capitalist country today where private property rights are everything, there is virtually no incentive other than profit, and there's no requirement for clients to behave in the public interest. The architect is often the only advocate for the public. At the same time, the architect is also charged with serving the interests of the client. The architect is asked to represent both sides of the case but is paid by one side. Many practitioners find it difficult to see that a client's interests are not necessarily their responsibility — or that they should even argue against those interests in some cases on behalf of the public, future users, or any number of other constituencies. Because the client is paying the architect, this is a very strange position to be in. But that is the role of the professional.

S T E I N Do you know of cases where architects have resigned a commission in this situation?

B E A C H I think it happens quite often. Architects who take that step are usually people who are professionally secure. But the dialogue within the profession on these issues is not very developed and certainly lags the discourse in other professions. Medical ethics is a long-standing, very well-regarded field, as is legal ethics. We have relatively little discussion of architectural ethics in the academy, which means that it can't trickle over into the profession.

And we haven't really focused on the most serious question at the root of architectural ethics, which is whether we are in fact engaged in a profession in the strictest definition. We may very well not be, which would mean that architecture is starting to resemble its earlier incarnation before the turn of the last century. Back then, it was an art that you came to by virtue of being a very insightful, masterful builder who took your work to a higher aesthetic level; you were a fine artist who was able to translate your work into the built medium. That doesn't suggest any of the duties that we expect of a professional. There are various theories about morality and art, but one could say that art *should* be devoid of ethical obligations — otherwise how would it be free to explore human experience? Human experience is not always goodness and beauty. I think that could be an explanation, and a very potent one, for why we shouldn't be talking about ethics at all, and why architects have been right to avoid the subject.

S T E I N I'd also add that it's likely that architects themselves have changed since then, in terms of their backgrounds and their expectations of the field. In the mid-19th century, for example, only a certain sort of person from a particular segment of society was drawn to become an architect-artist and did so with an attitude that his art was going to serve culture. This person understood that art was a social act without having to be explicitly educated in it.

In the 20th century, architecture as a discipline became democratized and its training became more formalized. Now the practice of architecture draws people from many different walks of life, people who have many different reasons for becoming architects.

B E A C H Yes, although I think training probably did occur in different, perhaps even more rigorous, ways before it was formalized within the academy. And that occurred with the recognition that architecture is an artistic pursuit in a medium that has enormous impact on people, because the medium is physically so large.

S T E I N And it's getting larger all the time — not only in terms of the size of individual buildings, but also in terms of the size of what now constitutes the built environment. There are now six-and-a-half billion people on the planet. All of us requiring architecture.

B E A C H Requiring *shelter*. I don't know if any of us require *architecture*. I think that's the problem. Providing shelter confers certain obligations, because you're intervening in people's lives. Providing art confers no obligations. And that is the component that differentiates architecture from medicine or law or engineering.

S T E I N We say that architecture is a value-added profession.

B E A C H You could say that's all it is. We take our cues from the building industry; we've learned how to run projects. But if you were being really strict about it, you could say the essential part of what we do, the thing that's most essential for humanity, doesn't need to be done by an architect.

S T E I N At the same time, it seems that our definition of architecture is expanding. Architecture firms are providing services to clients that only a little while ago weren't thought of as architectural services at all — conferring with CEOs about their corporate vision, examining building performance, projecting life-cycle costs.

B E A C H Those are all roles that were taken away from architects by project managers, construction managers, and other building professionals. We are now reclaiming them. Architects were in the same social circles as their clients — the people who were making decisions — and they gave that kind of advice all the time.

S T E I N The reason for recovering those roles now is that simply adding value to what someone else does is not highly thought of in our culture and doesn't pay much.

B E A C H Another reason is that the person who is closest to the client is the person who has the most control of the project, and control of the project may mean more money if that's what you want. Watching that control slip away and realizing that you are going to have to work with decisions made by other people is very frustrating and makes it nearly impossible to perform full professional services. You can't do right by the public or by the users if someone has already restricted your range of motion to the point where you have to do what has already been established.

S T E I N We've talked about several different areas of professional practice in which things don't work very well, not only for architects but also for clients and for the general public. It sounds a bit bleak. How can we fix things?

B E A C H I think that a lot rides on the young people in this profession.

S T E I N How can young people initiate changes to the profession? Are there models for them to follow? How can they avoid treading the same path?

B E A C H We have to look for models. Holland and Britain provide two examples. The Dutch government sponsors architecture firms — it actually gives them money. Somewhere along the line, Holland decided that one of its competitive advantages as a nation was its tradition of interesting architecture. The government made a strategic decision to become known for exporting architects and architecture. The British example is a

Cambridge Seven Associates, Inc. / photo: Steve Rosenthal

little different. There's a lottery for architecture in Britain and the proceeds go to increasing the fee on a selected project. If you're designing a bridge in Cornwall, for example, and your project is selected, you will get more than the standard fee, with the understanding that you will then create something interesting.

S T E I N The issue is that good design costs more money because it takes more time.

B E A C H Exactly. Holland has a more reliable government-instituted grants system, and Britain has a selective lottery system. Either way, the point is to support architectural research that otherwise wouldn't be done within the confines of the economics of a typical firm. Both Holland and Britain have recognized that research in practice is architectural research. This is very important. One can do research by adding time to the design process and through investigation into the design process itself. In both of those countries, the focus is on emerging architecture and emerging, young architects.

There are other reasons, though, that I think young people represent something promising, and that has to do with advances in what we teach them. One of the problems with the architecture profession is that everybody — Robert Gutman has already covered this ground — working in an architecture firm tends to be an architect. Not everyone working in a hospital is a doctor. Not everyone working in a law firm is a lawyer. Those environments include people who are trained to do other things. If we can't solve the problem by training people explicitly for different roles within an architecture firm, perhaps the problem will fade anyway. Eventually, with advances in computer technology, architecture firms will require fewer of these support roles and will be able to directly communicate their design intentions to the field.

S T E I N There is some sentiment that the people who are attracted to the architecture profession today, with its computerization of production and even design, are much different from the people who were attracted to the profession just a generation ago.

B E A C H This sounds like a troubling trend. I don't think that the value systems that make a good architect are necessarily related to the values that make someone good with computers.

S T E I N You don't see technology as a liberating influence?

B E A C H I'm saying that someone who's attracted to computers per se is not necessarily the person I want designing the built environment. I want someone who's interested in the built environment to design the built environment. I've never been one who thought that technology was an end in itself. It's a tool. I don't think that sitting at a computer all day is necessarily practicing architecture. It seems to me that an architecture office has room for many different types of workers, not just architects.

And I think that's possibly one of the reasons we're in this mess. People are trained to do something valiant on behalf of society, and they end up being technical people. If you want to disseminate architecture, let's take advantage of all these architecture graduates. Let's find clients, let's find projects, and put young people to work in ways that actually inspire them and their communities. A young Dutch architect, with a little boost from the government, could probably do something really interesting for a corner store somewhere or for a neighborhood group that otherwise might never cross paths with an architect. There's no reason why that can't happen here. ■■■

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Letter from Jerusalem

by Lior Couriel, Assoc. AIA

It was a beautiful crisp morning in Jerusalem in the spring of 2000. I was sitting at my office desk in the downtown neighborhood of Rehavia, surrounded by the pleasant busy-ness and background noises of my staff at work. I was thinking through the planning of the new town of Shilo — a community for 80,000 residents to be built adjacent to the 3,200-year-old Israelite temple and political capital. Much of my work in Jerusalem has involved a similar merging of the old and the new, which is such a persistent pattern in Israeli architecture and design.

The phone rang. It was Deb, my wife and friend for life, with the news that her fellowship had come through for studies at the Kennedy School of Government (KSG) at Harvard. We spent the next weeks excitedly discussing the long trip to New England, which was to entail Deb's studies, new schools for our four children, and a professional adventure for me. Over the next few months, I put my Jerusalem office on a footing which would enable me to manage and work from afar. Thus began a period of geographical and psychological zig-zagging, which was manifested professionally and personally through, on the one hand, our family's Boston experience, on the other, the harsh realities back at home in Israel, and then, on the third hand, the merging of US and Israeli concerns over the past few months since we have returned home to Jerusalem.

Cambridge embraced us with a mixture of hot air and humidity. The other nine Israeli fellows at the Kennedy School and their families were all cheerful and excited. KSG turned out to be extremely friendly, and we settled in nearby Brookline, just in time to find out it was even hotter than Cambridge. "God," I wondered, "is there any cooler air here?"

"Sure," replied architect Scott Richardson of Gorman Richardson Architects (GRA) at the end of my job interview. "Hopkinton gets cool in the winter. In the meantime, you may take off your tie." He was then more specific: "We *dress* casually but *work* professionally."

And so we did. I found myself completely immersed in a most challenging project: a new campus for EMC Corporation. Days flew by. GRA was in the middle of a growth spurt. I could feel the true heartbeat of America, and this was a fascinating sensation. We were busy developing our teamwork, adopting new managerial processes, perfecting GRA's project management procedures, and producing presentations. While totally magnetized by the size and scope of our project, I could hardly help noticing the first grim signs of the downturn in the US economy.

Back at home, matters were quite different. I flew back and forth several times to maintain and oversee my Jerusalem office operations. Thanks to the Web, e-mail, and good telecommunications, I was able to continue to manage my office from the US. My visits were used for site supervision and signing new contracts. The overall planning and construction environment in Israel was changing rapidly, due to political developments in our region. Since 1993, Israel had been engaged with its Palestinian neighbors in the controversial Oslo peace process. Endless efforts were put into negotiations with the Palestinian Authority. Most aspects of day-to-day life in Israel, from land and water use to security

and communications, were discussed openly in bilateral committees established to mediate the gap between the two sides. This process created a tangled geographical and political weave. Although the negotiating process never managed to fully satisfy all the parties involved, it brought tremendous hope and prosperity to both sides, eventually bringing about a historical peace treaty with the Kingdom of Jordan as well. During those years, fueled by unprecedented immigration to Israel from the former Soviet Union (over one million educated, highly trained and motivated professionals in just eight years!) and a liberal economic and monetary climate, Israel became a leader in the global high-tech arena. The nation's per-capita GNP matched that of Great Britain. Multinational conglomerates were formed overnight. Israel, powered by the IT revolution, was on the verge of shaping a bright new future that was to include cooperation with our neighbors.

However, in late 2000, while I was otherwise engaged at Gorman Richardson in Hopkinton and following developments from afar, efforts to achieve a final peace treaty between Israel and the Palestinian Authority came violently undone. Practically giving in to all of the Palestinians' demands, including the unprecedented approval to divide and share Jerusalem, Prime Minister Barak and President Clinton received a blunt Palestinian refusal at Camp David. Palestinian terrorist violence erupted almost immediately. My trips back to Israel revealed a more and more difficult everyday reality. At GRA, the weakening US economy finally struck our project in mid-summer of 2001 following the coldest winter I have ever experienced. The dot-com crisis reached everywhere, even hitting core technological giants.

And then, together with millions of Americans, we woke up on September 11 to the most frightening sight of a ruthless Islamic terrorism wave hitting New York City and Washington, DC. These horrible events brought about so much human suffering that they could only be followed, in my mind, by the incredible bravery, courage, and true sisterhood and brotherhood of those risking their lives trying to save others.

Deb and I immediately realized that our Boston sojourn had come to an end and that our duty lay back home. We both felt that with the unavoidable US retaliation, expected to eventually engulf Iraq and possibly Iran, Israel would become more than a mere spectator. With the Gulf War memories still fresh in our minds, it was important for us to join our friends, neighbors, and family. Upon our return, we found a completely different country from the one we had left only a year and a half earlier. The changes were overwhelming: soaring unemployment (10.5 percent of the workforce); government budgetary cutbacks of 5 percent; an economy close to stalling; and above all, an IT crisis, with hundreds of once promising start-up companies slipping into liquidation.

After September 11, those who care for democracy, human rights, and world order found themselves defending the trenches. In Jerusalem, as exposed as we are to terrorist acts, we were apprehensive that our "local" Palestinian terrorists had vowed to carry out similar actions against Israeli citizens. I believe that what struck us beyond the acts of September 11 themselves was the sight of cheerful crowds dancing in the streets in countries around the Middle East, celebrating what they believe was just punishment to the US and other Western societies.

A unique sense of compassion towards the victims in New York and Washington is clearly felt here. People in Jerusalem can identify with New Yorkers, not just on the grounds of shared values, but on the basis of common destiny. Since terror hits blindly, the best survival strategy is for every individual to assume personal responsibility, to keep one's eyes open, and realize that, indeed, we are our brothers' and sisters' keeper in the widest sense. We in Israel feel very much at the front lines of the West's current battle to define and to defend its values. We follow the US operations in Afghanistan with a prayer that these acts will bring an end to some of the terrorist acts.

Architecture? Neither Israelis nor Palestinians have much time to deal with it right now. How can it thrive under such circumstances? Still, possibly the best way of keeping one's mind sane and clear is to follow the words of Professor Gershtel, my teacher at the Haifa Technion, who 20 years ago told his students: "The essence of architecture practice is to employ the six D's rule: Dream and Design, Dream and Design, Dream and Design." ■■■

Lior Couriel, Assoc. AIA, is the principal of CACD-Couriel Architecture Construction and Development in Jerusalem and served as senior project manager at Gorman Richardson Architects in Hopkinton, Massachusetts. His work has included urban design, master planning, corporate, and residential projects. He participated in "Architects Without Borders," the roundtable discussion in *ArchitectureBoston*'s Summer 2001 "Import/Export" issue.

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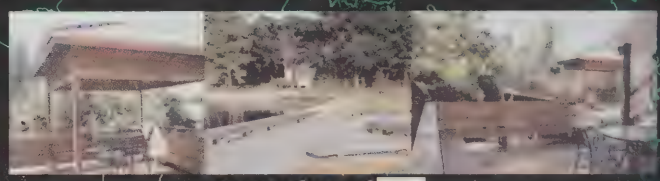

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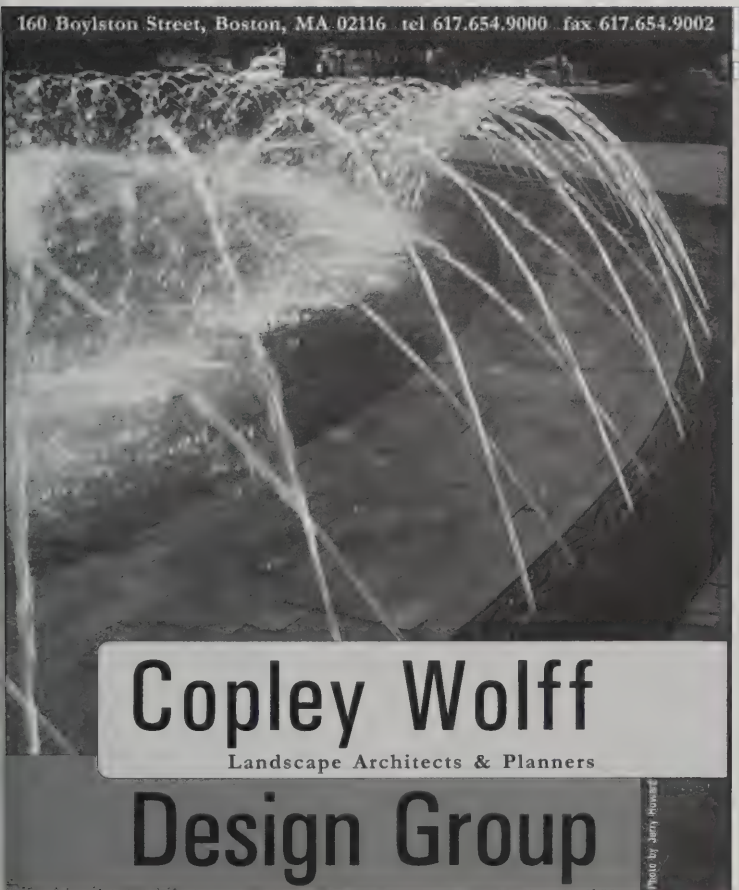

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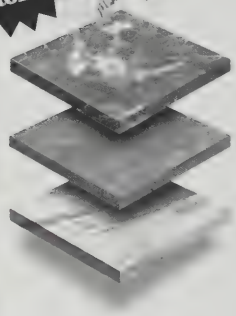

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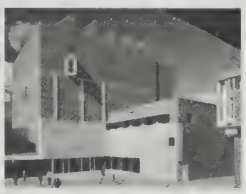

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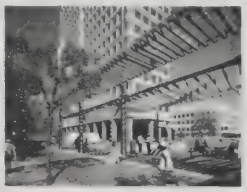

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Covering the Issues

Periodical roundup

by Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA

It's not easy being green... Architect Maya Lin weighs in on the environment and the American lifestyle in Oprah's February *O* magazine. Lin comments on the absurdity of small-town traffic ("rush hour to nowhere"), as she offers commonsense suggestions to help reduce American oil dependence. She caps her list of things we can each do — driving the speed limit, keeping our cars tuned — with a pitch for smart-growth urban planning. The February *Red Herring* offers an eye-opening alternative message: a series of articles in a special "Transportation" section highlights technological innovations that will make our cars and our traffic smarter. Commenting on the effect of these new technologies, one author suggests, "It's clear that more people will locate farther from urban work centers and commute greater distances" and "further expand the radius of settled areas." Not if Oprah has anything to do with it.

No squares here... "Just as ancient builders and geometers sought the golden mean, postwar designers strove for the perfect boomerang (not too thick, not too thin), the just-so kidney, and variations on the hourglass, the artist's palette, the rounded rectangle, and especially the blob." In the February *Smithsonian*, writer Doug Stewart considers biomorphic form, placing mid-century design within broader cultural contexts. From Eero Saarinen to Charles and Ray Eames, Alexander Calder to Isamu Noguchi, the TWA Terminal to Tupperware, 1950s designers shed wartime straitjacketed seriousness and embraced fun-loving curves. Out with machines for living! Long live the blob!

Industrial strength... With its usual grace and sophistication, *DoubleTake* offers in its Winter issue a photographic peek into the visually stunning (yet environmentally terrifying) "Landscape of Industry." "The landscape of industry is forbidden territory to those who don't work in it," notes photographer Andrew Borowiec, yet it takes up lots of our land while providing us with gasoline, electricity, and everyday goods. His photos reveal the hidden face of what powers our industrial economy.

Sounds peachy... "Is Atlanta the New Black Mecca?" Citing its "affordable housing, livable pace, and reputation for encouraging entrepreneurship," Charles Whitaker suggests in *Ebony*'s March issue that Atlanta is the "'go to' city for enterprising African-Americans." So begins the first in a series of *Ebony* articles on blacks in major cities. Atlanta's physical sprawl regularly makes headlines; Whitaker offers an alternative perspective on the city's growth. His enthusiasm for Atlanta's energy is palpable. Just goes to show that urban design isn't everything.

I know art when I see it... Did you know that *Omphalos* — the red, pink, and black granite sculpture next to Out-of-Town News in Harvard Square — is named "to acknowledge the many centers of learning in the general Boston area, the spiritual locus of the 'Athens of America'"? Or that *Thermopylae* — at the base of the JFK tower in Boston's Government Center — "focuses the despair of democracy into an image of passionate conviction"? Learn about the ideas and construction of these pieces and other public installations by sculptor Dimitri Hadzi. Christopher Busa profiles the life and work of this artist, who's left his mark on so much of our public space, in the *Provincetown Arts* 2001-2002 annual issue.

Money matters... *Worth* sheds one type of light on the subject of money in the March cover story, "The Richest Person in Town." This special report sought out the wealthiest people in America's 100 largest metropolitan areas. (Boston ranks seventh.) Bill Gates and Michael Bloomberg are here, along with many unknowns. But far more interesting than who is on the list is what they've done with their wealth. Consider these individuals' impact on architecture and the built world — or what it could be. Then consider Hyatt hotels worldwide, the top prize for architecture, the renovated IIT campus in Chicago, the South Boston waterfront, countless small arts organizations, museums, an architecturally adventurous bandshell... There's only one name, and one (Chicago) family: Pritzker. ■■■

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, teaches the architecture studios at Smith College and maintains a practice in Boston.

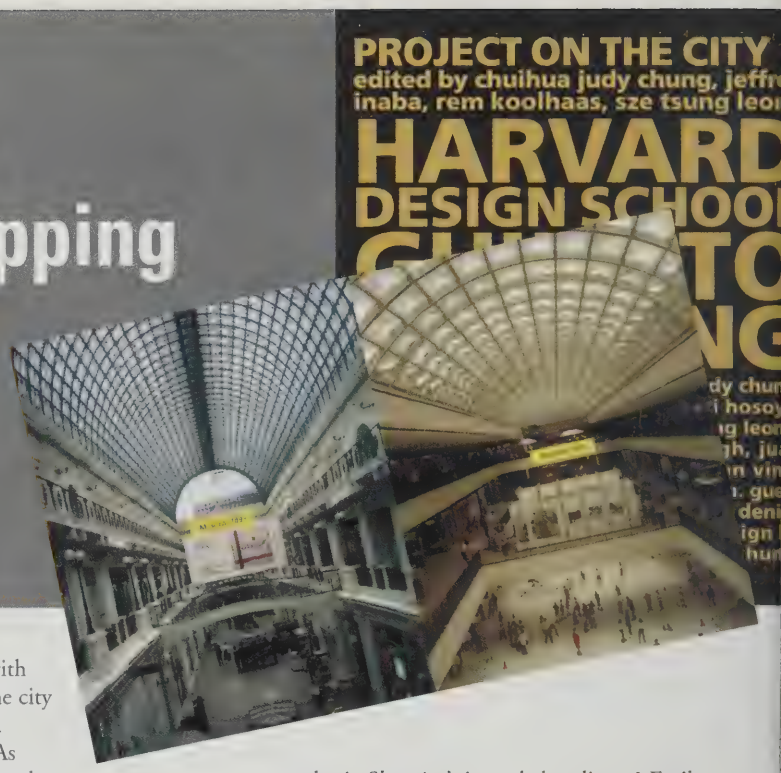
Books

The Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping

edited by Chuihua Judy Chung, Jeffrey Inaba, Rem Koolhaas, and Sze Tsung Leong

Taschen, 2002

Reviewed by
Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA



They might have called this a collection of essays and left it at that.

The Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping is a "battery" (to borrow a word from the publisher) of 45 essays written by 13 Harvard graduate students and edited by a team including celebrity professor Rem Koolhaas. Koolhaas — of recent Prada store and Pritzker Prize fame — has astutely observed contemporary urban conditions for 25 years. Under his guidance, these students argue that shopping has taken over cities and changed urban life forever.

This book is most easily defined by what it's not: It's not about street vendors or open-air markets. It's not even about necessity or trade. Moreover, despite appearances — and selected Asian and European references — it's not globally comprehensive.

What *is* here are discussions of shopping as leisure-time activity focusing on department stores, malls, and other venues for dispensing with disposable income. Like Koolhaas' now-common anti-polemic polemic, *Shopping* attempts to avoid comment, critique, and directives. Instead, this work illuminates what we too often take for granted, and that, indeed, is its strength.

Nevertheless, disposable income is a product of the Industrial Revolution, so it should be no surprise that the rapidly rising pace of leisure-time purchasing parallels the rapidly rising growth of industrial and post-industrial economies. Yet this explanation is largely ignored.

Several excellent essays examine specific architectural innovations (air conditioning, the escalator), moments of retail significance (London's Crystal Palace), and phenomena that have affected retail space ("Nikevolution," the bar code). Several authors offer interesting observations, noting that the market economy has become the dominant global standard, that shopping changes to keep up with the times, and that the city has been reduced to a shopping metaphor. As discerning Koolhaas book-buyers have come to expect, the editors offer compelling diagrams, photos, and hypergraphics, including: a photo "graph" using Manhattan as a unit of retail area (world retail area = 33 Manhattans); side-by-side, same-scale comparisons of shopping-center floor plans; and in the essay "Relearning from Las Vegas," diagrams from the 1972 classic redone for 2000, illustrating *Shopping*'s interview with Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown.

Though frequently provocative, this book collectively is no more than its parts. It falls victim to its own hyperbole. Is "shopping arguably the last remaining form of public activity"? Wasn't it the first as well? The book also claims that shopping has recently "mounted an unrelenting transformation of the city." Don't buy it. True, we can now consume Big Macs in front of the Pantheon, but haven't there been plaza cafés for centuries? *Shopping*'s celebration of the extraordinary size of the contemporary retail economy is not the same as proving a total "transformation." As an academic work, *Shopping*'s research is superficial; its words are sloppy, and its distinctions are neither clearly nor carefully made. A product of the era of Madonna media, this book aims not for clarity, but for headlines. And with "research" taken straight from the headlines, readers who follow the newspapers will find little that is new here.

The joke is on us. A product of the Harvard Design School's "Project on the City" (the Koolhaas-led series of group research theses examining contemporary conditions of urbanity), *Shopping* is the first of four projected books with the Big H in their titles, as if that branding lends credence or boosts sales. Not a serious academic work, yet too expensive for pop culture — who is *Shopping*'s intended audience? Easily-influenced students, *Wallpaper**-buying hipsters, those with an appetite for All Things Harvard? This book is as much an example of consumer culture as a critique of it.

Ultimately, much of the Koolhaas/*Shopping* phenomenon is simply evidence that architects (and architecture students) are finally waking up to the dirty little secret that formal design ideas rarely shape cities; the glamour of Prada and the Pritzker aside, this is Koolhaas' real contribution to the field. Central Park was part of a real estate scheme. Haussmann's Parisian boulevards provided political control of the masses in an era of unprecedented expansion. Downtown Boston properties fronting the Big Dig's soon-to-be "open space" will be among the nation's most valuable. Though we teach the over-simplified design result, the reality is that cities have always been market-driven.

In a strong but buried indictment, one author argues, "To a great extent, the architectural and urban planning professions, especially within academic circles, have historically exhibited an allergy to the commercial." The architectural press, too. This is perhaps *Shopping*'s greatest contribution. Cities are complicated and messy, and design is just one ingredient in the rich urban stew. *Shopping* offers an approach to be applauded, a result to be questioned, yet undoubtedly a subject to be studied.

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, teaches the architecture studios at Smith College and maintains a practice in Boston.

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Books

The Ethical Architect: The Dilemma of Contemporary Practice

by Tom Spector

Princeton Architectural Press, 2001

Reviewed by
Bradford C. Walker AIA

The subtitle of *The Ethical Architect* — "the dilemma of contemporary practice" — may lead many to expect a dry exploration of the troublesome, if mundane, issues of right and wrong confronting architects in their ordinary course of business: how to deal with unsavory clients, uncooperative consultants, or unfulfilled employees. Fortunately, author Tom Spector dispatches these sorts of issues as the purview of "citizenship ethics"— don't lie, cheat, or steal. Instead, he claims the more specialized ground of professional ethics and offers a much more rewarding view of the landscape of design and decision-making in our discipline.

Ethical practice is based on the proposition that architects have a duty to place the interests of their clients above their own and, where the issues are clear, to place the interests of society above those of the client. The nature of society's interests beyond basic life safety, however, is a perplexing mystery to most. Yet juggling this dilemma — sorting through the ethical issues of individual and common interests — is precisely the reason that architects alone have been granted a monopoly to design buildings. As Spector notes,"the architect's stamp is presumed evidence that not only has the client engaged a skilled practitioner to design a building in accordance with his needs, but also that the architect has properly recognized the public's interest in the project, and endeavored to protect society from the potentially devastating effects of shoddy or insensitive construction."

Of course, chief among the moral dilemmas unique to architecture is design itself. The act of defining parameters and assigning hierarchies to project determinants, such as function, site, program, budget, and aesthetics, relies on an examination of deeply held values — the architect's, the client's, and society's — and is thus inherently an ethics-based undertaking. Whose values will be applied, and how? A case study examining the 1991 Anshen + Allen design for an addition to the Salk Institute illustrates the point. Is the architect's purpose to protect the original vision of Salk and Kahn? To preserve the position that the buildings and landscape have assumed in the canon of American architecture? To maintain the Institute's viability as a place to work? Spector deftly demonstrates the various ways the structures of moral philosophy illuminate the decision-making that architects face every day. Other case studies examine ways to evaluate Wright's Guggenheim or to weigh the conflicting virtues of open space versus affordable housing in San Francisco. Along the way, Spector weighs in with opinions on many contemporary issues, including the ethically dubious drive for the licensing of interior designers and the true purpose of building codes.

Throughout, Spector informs and cajoles, as he demonstrates the imperative for architects to again "co-join" their desire to be both conscientious professionals and good designers, because they are in fact the same thing.

Bradford C. Walker AIA is a principal of Ruhl Walker Architects, Inc., in Boston and is co-chair of the Boston Society of Architects Ethics Forum.

Form Follows Finance

by Carol Willis

Princeton Architectural Press, 1995

Reviewed by
Matthew Kiefer

It's a now-familiar story: In the last decade of the 19th century, the rise of office-based enterprises and the separation of managerial and clerical functions from manufacturing activities, coupled with the perfection of the elevator and steel structural skeleton, produced a remarkable new building type. The skyscraper soon came to dominate the skylines of two cities in particular, with two very different results: New York, with its tall slender towers, and Chicago, with its lower, block-like buildings.

In *Form Follows Finance*, Carol Willis tells the less familiar story of how these two building types evolved as the requirements of the speculative office building were adapted to the particulars of local ordinances, market cycles, lot sizes, and land values. She makes a brisk but convincing case that these factors were far more influential than differences in corporate image-making, cultural aspirations, or stylistic fashion.

Virtually all the office buildings of the skyscraper era were speculative enterprises — in Cass Gilbert's phrase, "machines to make the land pay" — intended to deliver natural light, a standard module of two perimeter offices opening into a shared clerical anteroom, and reliable elevator service.

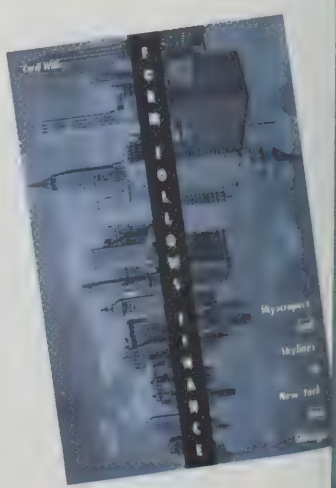
But accommodating these market imperatives had to contend with local conditions. Lower Manhattan had small lots and oddly shaped blocks. Land values varied widely based on proximity to the commercial epicenter at the intersection of Wall and Broad Streets. Until 1916, New York had no building restrictions. These factors produced tightly clustered, slender, ever-taller towers, at a rate which alarmed New Yorkers sufficiently to secure the passage of the city's 1916 zoning setback ordinance, which in turn produced the ziggurat towers for which Manhattan then became famous.

Chicago's Loop, by contrast, was platted into large, square blocks, most bisected by service alleys. The great Chicago fire of 1873 cleared large building sites. After 1893, Chicago had a height limit, which ranged first from 130 feet to, later, 260 feet. These factors produced a fairly even distribution of "hollow box" buildings throughout the Loop.

Form Follows Finance offers interesting lessons about the ways zoning and markets shape cities, often producing unexpected responses — the ziggurat, the hollow box, the tower-in-a-plaza. Large, speculative buildings are expensive and have a long useful life, so their marketability eclipses other factors in determining their form. (The Empire State Building, the world's tallest for 40 years, didn't earn a profit for more than 20 years, accordingly inspiring little competition.) Building regulations often lag the market cycles they respond to.

The book's description of the search for the most efficient skyscraper form takes on new meaning after September 11. While predictions of the demise of the skyscraper are no doubt premature, the events of September 11 have resulted in a more sober appraisal of where vertical efficiency stops and hubris begins in the relentless quest for the optimal building form.

Matthew J. Kiefer is a partner at the Boston law firm of Goulston & Storrs, where he practices real estate development and land-use law. He teaches a course in land-use regulation at the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

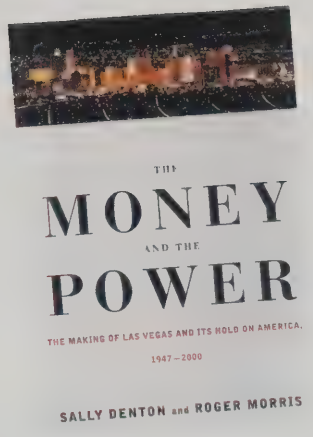


The Money and the Power: The Making of Las Vegas and Its Hold on America

by Sally Denton and Roger Morris

Knopf, 2001 (hard); Vintage, 2002 (paper)

Reviewed by Scott Simpson FAIA



In 1940, Tom Hull, the owner of several hotels in Los Angeles, was on his way to Salt Lake City when he had a flat tire on the outskirts of Las Vegas. While waiting for help, he was amazed at the amount of passing traffic and decided that it would be a good place to build a new hotel. Hull bought 60 acres for $100 per acre and within a year opened the El Rancho, featuring a huge swimming pool to entice passing motorists. Soon afterward, others followed his lead. Bugsy Siegel arrived in 1942 and, backed by mob money, began to invest heavily in local establishments like the Golden Nugget and the Frontier. Thus began a building boom of mythic proportions — one that continues to this day.

What is it about Las Vegas? A confluence of money, power, politics, entertainment, and corruption, it has a curious grip on the American psyche. A place of unfettered imagination and extravagance, where all things seem possible, it is a world-renowned destination resort with more hotel rooms and convention activity than any other.

The Money and the Power is a well-researched history of modern Las Vegas that tells the story of how the city came to be what it is, exposing the root structure that connects everything and everybody in town. It's a rich mix of Hollywood glamour, mob connections, business acumen and, yes, civic virtue.

One of the things that characterize Vegas is that it's both an idea and a place, and the place-making is hugely important. This mundane but powerful fact was famously articulated by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown in their study *Learning from Las Vegas*. From the very beginning, the people who built the city understood that the architecture was an integral part of their success. Like a high-stakes poker game, each new hotel placed a bigger and bigger bet on the table, and all bets paid off. Today's newest resorts contain thousands of rooms and millions of square feet, amply demonstrating the power of design to create and sustain illusion.

Whether or not you are a fan of Las Vegas and the values that it represents, *The Money and the Power* is a good read. There are lessons here for all of us, especially design professionals. Built on a scrubby patch of desert in the middle of nowhere, with nothing in particular to recommend it, Las Vegas has become the fastest-growing and most prosperous city in America. It is the ultimate designed environment — everything there came from somewhere else. *The Money and the Power* goes to the heart of this phenomenon; it's a good look at what cities are made of — not only concrete, steel and glass, but also the passions and the power of those who create them.

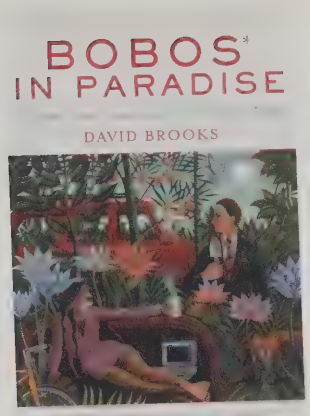
Scott Simpson FAIA is a principal of The Stubbins Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and a member of the board of directors of the American Institute of Architects.

Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There

by David Brooks

Simon & Schuster, 2000

Reviewed by Julianna Waggoner, Assoc. AIA



They're smart! Playful! Rich! Funky! Sensible! Eclectic! They're covertly acquisitive, yet truly concerned! And they're in charge.

In this work of "comic sociology," David Brooks posits that Bobos — the Bourgeois Bohemians — are the new American elite. His freshly coined term describes the "highly educated folk who have one foot in the bohemian world of creativity and another foot in the bourgeois realm of ambition and worldly success" — an amalgam of '60s revolutionaries and '80s capitalists. Bobos are a Sundance catalogue come to life.

Well, now we know what to call all those folks who mix spirituality and concern for the environment with corporate hyper-achievement and concern for the stock market. With some careful editing, though, we could have found out in about half the time. Brooks' theory is pertinent, and the book is generally amusing and occasionally quite funny. But *Bobos* began as a series of articles and, unfortunately, it reads that way.

Despite its loosely corralled structure, the book leaves the reader with an understanding of today's power class. Brooks gracefully acknowledges his own Bobo status, and then joyfully dissects the societal group and its underpinnings.

Boboism operates on several key points: self-actualization, continuous professional achievement, reconciliation of philosophical opposites, and, apparently, unbridled consumption of caffeinated beverages. Bobos acquire expensive material objects that indicate the owner's Sensitivity to The Great Rhythms of Life (natural slate shower stalls, for example). Bobos believe in self-indulgence, but only in the service of self-improvement. (Bobos don't just "enjoy orgasms; they achieve orgasm.") Corporate Bobos monitor the bottom line, but prize kooky disheveled geniuses, workspaces designed like '60s-style open classrooms, and Silly Putty as a creative tool. Brooks asserts that Bobos are politically correct, and he fairly thoroughly lambasts WASPs, but regrettably missing is any significant assessment of the impact of gender or race. Bobos are still primarily white guys.

Design professionals may be both amused and dismayed to discover that some of their current pet concepts — "smart growth" and "sustainable development" — are perfect illustrations of the Bobo reconciliation of opposites. Brooks waxes poetic over Jane Jacobs, author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, dubbing her "proto-Bobo" for her New Urbanist-style suggestions about the organic structure of communities.

The book closes with an unwittingly poignant pre-September 11 focus. Describing political life, Brooks notes that "passions are muted. Washington is a little dull." He portrays his generation as "largely unscarred by economic depression and war," yearning for "an updated version of that sense of service, of that sober patriotism" expressed by the post-World War II ruling class: "The Bobo task is to rebuild some sense of a united polity, some sense of national cohesion, without crushing the individual freedoms we have won over the past generation." Hmm. Sounds like our current national debate.

Julianna Waggoner, Assoc. AIA is the marketing director for Dietz & Company Architects in Springfield, Massachusetts.

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Site Work

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www.opensecrets.org

"Your guide to the money in US elections." See who's given what to whom. Check out the winners of the ambassadorial lottery. Track the big contributors to your senators and representatives. Find out who your neighbors are really supporting. It ain't a secret.

American Numismatic Association

www.money.org

ANA was chartered by Congress to "promote the study and collection of money…for research, interpretation, and preservation of history and culture from ancient times to the present." To promote the collection of money? Isn't that the job of the IRS?

Marketwatch

www.cbs.marketwatch.com

There's a lot to be said for not knowing what the market is doing today. But if you don't subscribe to the blissful ignorance strategy, you can log on anytime to "Marketwatch" for an instant shot of adrenaline.

The Salary Calculator

www.homefair.com/homefair/calc/salcalc.html

Much more fun than video games. Enter your current salary and community, then pick a fantasy destination. The Calculator compares costs of living and tells you what your equivalent salary would be.

The Cheapskate Monthly

www.cheapskatemonthly.com

OK, so you can't be *too* much of a cheapskate — you have to subscribe to this site. But you'll get all kinds of neat money-saving info, like how to make your own Gatorade.

Eddie Money

www.eddiemoney.com

How can you forget "Two Tickets to Paradise" or "Baby Hold On to Me" or "Take Me Home Tonight"? Face it — you can't.

What's a Guinea? Money and Coinage in Victorian England

www.wilkiecollins.demon.co.uk/coinage/coins.htm

Remember all those Victorian novels filled with characters saying, "That'll be three bob, guv'nor"? At last, a real reader's service — a guide to Victorian currency. Now you, too, will know that 43 pence is three shillings and sevenpence. Just don't ask about the farthings.

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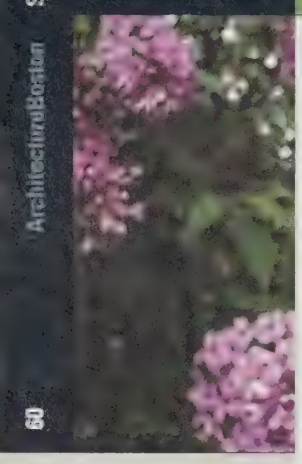
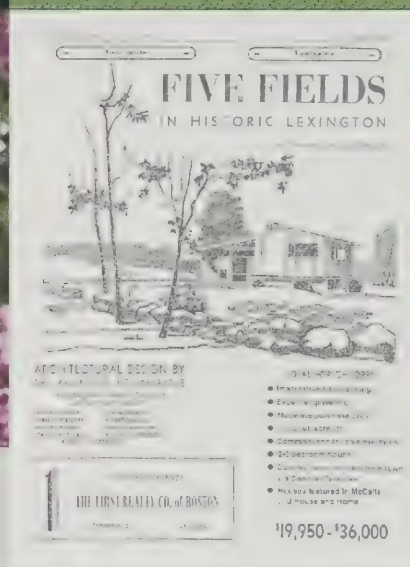
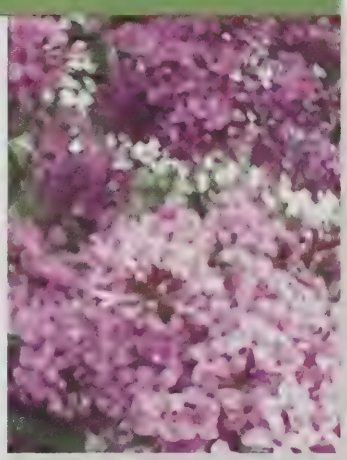
Other Voices by Alex Beam

Five Fields







When I describe where I live now, I like to say that I was thrown out of Paradise. In truth, I left voluntarily. Paradise was where my wife and I bought our first home, a small, two-bedroom Cape Cod-style house in a 1940s development. Young couples with small children owned most of the houses, which sat on tiny lots. When the families grew, they moved out, because the lots were too small to expand. Barely 15 years after we left the neighborhood for a larger home, the area had almost completely repopulated itself with couples much like we had been, men and women in their early thirties, with one or two children and possibly a third — and the prospect of a move — on the way.

Not so long ago, I walked back in time, into a similar Paradise. The site this time was Five Fields — The Architects Collaborative's 80-acre development in Lexington, Massachusetts. TAC developed Five Fields immediately after its better-known experiment in suburban living, Six Moon Hill, also in Lexington. Many of the architects lived at Six Moon Hill and wanted to apply their expertise to a larger site where they could exert near-total control. Because the AIA code of ethics prohibited them from directly owning a development, they created a company called Site and Shelter, Inc. that purchased the former Cutler Farm. With the active participation of the legendary Bauhaus architect Walter Gropius, a TAC partner, they started selling pitched-roof, shoeboxy, International Style one-family homes to young professionals. By 1952, the complete plan had evolved. TAC offered 62 lots around a five-acre Common Land. Fifty years later, no lot has been subdivided, and the lovely common area, which wraps around twin ponds landscaped with weeping willows contributed by resident Hideo Sasaki, is still open for Frisbee, touch football, swimming in the community pool, or Capture-the-Flag, as it has been for five decades.

I visited Five Fields for the first time earlier this spring, in the company of Sam and Vivian Berman, one of the original homesteading couples. They had moved to Boston from New York City, and they knew they wanted to live in a contemporary house. Vivian, an artist, had heard of Walter Gropius. Sam, who worked in his father's trucking company, had not. Of the several home types available, they chose the "Maxipac," a 2,500-square-foot, bi-level, concrete-block rectangle designed by Gropius and the young architect Richard Morehouse. "Everybody who moved in was young," Vivian recalls. And fecund, too. By 1954, Five Fields' 56 resident families (some had purchased two lots) had spawned 100 children! The first families were classic "early adopters": engineers working at Polaroid or Raytheon; some writers; academics from the nearby universities. They created an astonishing community. Children and grown-ups staged summer theatricals; one year, the grown-ups tackled Jean Anouilh's *Antigone*, while the children over nine assembled sets and memorized a youth version of Shakespeare's *Tempest*. Together they enjoyed hootenannies, swim races, and lavish summer barbecues. Very few of the children went away to summer camp, because Five Fields *was* a summer camp. The kids didn't intermarry, the Bermans theorize, because, like their own offspring, they always regarded their Five Fields friends as siblings.

The problem with Paradise is that no one ever leaves. Because the lots were large, the houses could be expanded almost infinitely. "First settlers" like the Bermans still occupy nine of the homes and 17 other residents have been there 30 years or more. Only recently has the natural exodus to retirement communities affected Five Fields. The original, spacious TAC layout had other unintended consequences. There are now only a dozen original TAC designs in the area. The modest, planar, glass-and-clapboard "chicken coops," as the locals derided them, have morphed into attractive, rambling contemporary homes. Most of the additions enhance the contemporary style of the original houses. But in one instance, a builder razed a TAC house and threw up a jagged, ugly mini-mansion that looms over the interlocking ponds of the Common Ground.

Just as no one wants to move out, few can afford to move in. A smaller Five Fields home now costs about $700,000; a larger one just sold for almost $1 million. So here is the difference between the Paradise where I once lived and the magnificently tasteful, TAC-conceived Eden: Mine proved to be re-usable, and theirs did not.

Alex Beam is a columnist for *The Boston Globe* and is the author of two novels and, most recently, *Gracefully Insane* (Public Affairs), the story of McLean Hospital.

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September/October 2002

Health

Anyone who has recently shopped for a chair has noticed it. Residential furniture has transmogrified to Brobdingnagian proportions; a single sofa now occupies a square footage roughly equivalent to the 1950s FHA standards for an entire bedroom. The Gen-Xers' craze for "classic Modern" furniture is very likely driven by the fact that it is the only furniture that will fit into the tiny apartments that they can afford. While some salespeople suggest that the outsized furniture is appropriate for the outsized McMansions of their more affluent customers, others offer a reason that sounds closer to the truth: Americans today are larger than they used to be. They are also far more informal than they used to be: the posture required to balance precariously in Breuer's 1925 Wassily chair is closer to the pressed-knees-and-ankles perch of a Chippendale chair than the spread-eagle sprawl of a contemporary "sectional."

Today's outsized furniture is one reasonably benign manifestation of the relationship between the body, behavior, and the built environment. Others lurk more malevolently in the public's consciousness: allergies, auto-immune syndromes, even miscarriages blamed on "sick" buildings; lead-poisoned toddlers; buildings that cannot shelter us from biochemical terrorist attacks.

If buildings are commonly perceived as passive agents of ill-health, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that they can also promote good health, healing, and well-being. And yet designers have failed to seize the opportunity not only to win recognition for what many already do well, but also to champion the kind of research that can provide irrefutable evidence that investment in the built environment can also be an investment in public health. Even the designers who are already hard at work in related efforts such as indoor air quality and sustainability have failed to adequately position their work on the frontier of public health. Indoor air quality, or IAQ, has never shaken free of its defensive identity relative to sick building syndrome. Sustainability, often going by the "green building" moniker, has allied itself with the high moralism of environmentalism rather than the immediacy of the everyday issues affecting parents of children with behavioral problems or office workers with maladies defying diagnosis or sympathy.

The popularity of feng shui, the acceptance of alternative medicines, and openness to nontraditional therapies suggest that the public would be receptive to initiatives promoting good design as an agent of good health. Already, nationally recognized public-health experts including John Spengler of the Harvard School of Public Health and Andy Dannenberg and Chris Kochtitzky of the Centers for Disease Control are making the case that designers have failed to make for themselves. Their attention to health issues is drawing attention to the human issues in design: how people react physically and psychologically to the spaces they inhabit.

These ideas are not new; they enjoyed an academic vogue in the 1970s and can claim some successes, such as design for Alzheimer's patients. But today's needs and opportunities are even greater. Health is a significant problem, and architects like to think of themselves as problem-solvers. Sounds like a natural.

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA
Editor

2 **Letters to the Editor**

8 **Body-Building:**
Buildings, health, and well-being
A roundtable discussion with:
Elizabeth Ericson FAIA, Valerie Fletcher, Marc Maxwell AIA, Kyra Montagu, Elizabeth Padjen FAIA, Robert Ryan, and John Zeisel, PhD

20 **Building the Bunker:**
Defensible space and defensive behavior
by David Dixon FAIA

26 **A Green Grand Tour:**
Lessons from Europe's best green buildings
by Bruce Coldham AIA

32 **Where Am I?**
The city as a place of healing
by Joan Wickersham

34 **To Your Health:**
Public health and the built environment
John Spengler, PhD talks with Kira Gould, Assoc. AIA

42 **Letter from Oslo**
by Edward Robbins

45 **Covering the Issues:**
Periodical roundup
by Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA

47 **Books**

51 **Index to Advertisers**

51 **Site Work**
Web sites of note

52 **Other Voices:**
The House on Stanton Road
by Marcie Hershman

2002: Health
Volume 5: Number 3

Letters

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Willy Sclarsic's article, "Architecture and the Pro-Forma," [Summer 2002] provides valuable insight and clarity, distinguishing between the demand for architectural services and the demand for architecture — and the relative values placed on them by various audiences. His analysis is incisive and compelling, but his conclusions incomplete.

It is true that most contemporary architectural production seems culturally marginal, but the absence of valuable content in design is not merely a stylistic disconnect with popular audiences. The fact is the domain of cultural production itself has both changed and exploded — architecture competes for attention (and therefore money) with other forms of cultural expression that are mobile, self-perpetuating, relatively inexpensive, and often disposable. Architecture has none of these qualities, the product being heavy, expensive to produce, relatively permanent, and not easily able to achieve a continuous sense of novelty.

Architecture cannot really compete as a commoditized product or experience with the likes of pop music, SUVs, Michael Jordan, CNN and the drama *du jour* — designers certainly don't have the same media budgets to hawk their wares. Some notable architects are taking up this challenge, but I seriously doubt that it is a sustainable (or desirable) proposition for more than a few individual practitioners.

The larger profession needs to deal with the alarming disintegration of the civic realm, whether at the level of community or the centers of government. The lack of enlightened civic leadership actively seeking to express contemporary values and aspirations of society through the design of the physical environment leads to building becoming merely the by-product of our society's metabolic activities.

If architects are going to be relevant both culturally and economically, we need to become more realistic and less reasonable at the same time. More realistic in the sense that architecture isn't produced by taking the road of least resistance. The constant whining and complaining about the hardships of being an architect do not help the frame of mind necessary to accomplish what society requires of us — to generate and re-integrate relevant social, political, economic, aesthetic, and technical content.

Architects need to be more unreasonable in the sense that fundamental change seldom happens by reasonable people acting reasonably. What is "reasonable" is what normatively succeeds now, not what could be, should be, or needs to be. Architects, especially designers, need formal training in the political arts and negotiation to be able to operate effectively in the arenas of government, business, and the public domain. We need to be willing to overcome inertia, skepticism, inertness, even outright stupidity, and to do this every day without flinching. Moreover, we need to regain mastery over the process of building and be willing to accept calculated but significant risks. Our rehabilitation as players in the new century will not come from being more efficient vendors.

Paul W. Nakazawa AIA, Principal
Nakazawa Consultants
Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts

It was surprising to read Lior Couriel's opinion concerning the Israeli and Palestinian peace treaty in his "Letter from Jerusalem" [Summer 2002]. It is my belief that the magazine should not be a vehicle for personal opinions concerning international politics.

I admire the varied content of *ArchitectureBoston*, especially the views contained in your interesting interviews, and the ways in which our lives are affected by architecture. It would be a shame to cloud that focus.

Marina Rendino
Sharon, Massachusetts

Kudos to *ArchitectureBoston*! I thoroughly enjoyed the Summer 2002 issue on money, a topic that causes much anguish to many who labor in this profession. I'd like to comment on an aspect of that topic that I believe reflects a series of ethical dilemmas facing more than a few of our colleagues.

Working for public-sector and non-profit clients, our firm is constantly faced with the need to be as "competitive" as possible with regard to our contract design fees. Often, the principal challenge to architects and their consultants is to produce projects that responsibly serve both owners and users with efficiency, dignity, and humanity, despite the limited resources available to support the design professionals' efforts. Frequently, the greatest degree of satisfaction to be derived from a project's completion is the realization that this puzzle has been well solved.

We recently discontinued discussions with two local charitable non-profit clients over terms on substantive design contracts. One client insisted that design fees be deferred until after the project was fully complete, a payment schedule they claimed was acceptable to another local firm. The other client elected to award their design contract to a local firm (the same!) that agreed to do the entire project pro bono.

Obviously, in a market economy each of us is free to price our services as we individually see fit. The US Justice Department's actions against the design professions in recent years has underlined the need for an arm's-length relationship between practitioners when it comes to setting contract fees. Nonetheless, I believe there is an issue of ethics raised by these recent occurrences, one that is worthy of exploration by the profession at large.

An architect's responsibility to the client goes beyond a strict interpretation of the words included in the design contract. There is an obligation to the eventual users of the built environment (and to the public in general) that is shortchanged when insufficient fees are available to support thoughtful, coordinated efforts by the design professionals. Entering into a contract without sufficient resources to execute the work properly is an abandonment of these obligations. Architects have responsibility to their consultants and staffs to pay fair wages and fees for services rendered, and to provide reasonable support and infrastructure for them during execution of their responsibilities. Architects entering a financial arrangement similar to that outlined above would be forced to transfer a major portion of the financial burden onto those who work for them. I believe an architect has an obligation to the profession — to uphold its legal and ethical standards, and to avoid actions that will detract from the profession in the public's eye, or to obscure the potential value of fellow practitioners to potential clients. I suggest that business strategies such as those outlined above cheapen the profession and tend to encourage predatory practices against other design professionals.

D. Michael Hicks AIA
Executive Vice President
Domenech Hicks & Krockmalnic Architects
Boston

I read the roundtable, "Moving Forward: The Future of History," [Spring 2002] with great interest. George Thrush's ideas that the preservation and environmental movements represent the "only shared non-market values we seem to have codified" and that preservation and historical authenticity have emerged as default expressions of shared meaning is worth more exploration. Is it true "we don't have any focused criteria for evaluating newer buildings?" The issue to me is one of focus on *local* investments in long- and short-term social, economic and cultural values versus "foreign aid" that promotes controversy, competes with local activities, induces crisis-driven decision making, raises infrastructure costs and sets up "take the money and run" images that entice attention away from other criteria.

The controversy over Hans Hollein's design for 90 Mt. Auburn Street in Cambridge, Massachusetts was only peripher-ally about architecture or historic preservation. Hollein's design was a political statement. Harvard Real Estate (like a very spoiled child) is determined to do whatever it wants no matter what anyone says. The program and design thumbed its nose even at Harvard's wealthy alumni. Harvard Real Estate's idea to use the University's $40-billion endowment to compete with everyone wanting to build in Boston and Cambridge is raising the price of property and development — to its own as well as everyone else's disadvantage. Instead of using its endowment to help local citizens create residential properties and local businesses that support University needs, instead of helping address and resolve transportation, energy, water, and waste infrastructure problems, instead of listening to its alumni, teachers, students, start-up business leaders and neighbors, Harvard Real Estate said, through Hollein's design, that it is proud to be out on a limb by itself and delighted to stick it to everybody.

There's a pretty good reason neighbors like red brick. It's a very tolerant material that requires minimum maintenance and when used artistically is very beautiful. Brick was made locally in Cambridge and Boston until it became fashionable to use more expensive foreign materials to support fossil-fuel industries. The screen on Hollein's design needed to be heated to keep from dripping ice or wet snow on the necks of passers-by. The Georgian buildings surrounding the site, such as Lowell House, express the intimate urban scale that has drawn people to Harvard for years and still does.

Peter Roudebush, President
Association for Public Transportation
Cambridge, Massachusetts

It was very insightful to read the letter from Theodore Szostkowski AIA of Kallmann McKinnell & Wood Architects [Summer 2002] defending their presentation of Boston's World Trade Center West project before the Boston Civic Design Commission.

In the letter he states, "Since this element [a substantial cornice integral to the design], *as we came to learn*, would have required a building code variance..." (Italics are mine.) Why is it with many architects that design comes first and code compliance is an afterthought, or as appears in this case, is brought to the architect's attention by others? Is it not our professional responsibility to our clients to ensure that our designs, from first schematic to occupancy, are in total compliance with all applicable codes?

The AIA Building Performance PIA [Professional Interest Area], in its role as educator of codes to architects, always stresses the need to do code reviews early during project development to ensure compliance and to avoid costly redesign, lost time, project delays and embarrassment to clients. Not only is it our professional responsibility, but it is also good business practice.

Jerry R. Tepe FAIA
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Letters may be edited for clarity and length and must include your name, address, and daytime telephone number. Length should not exceed 300 words.

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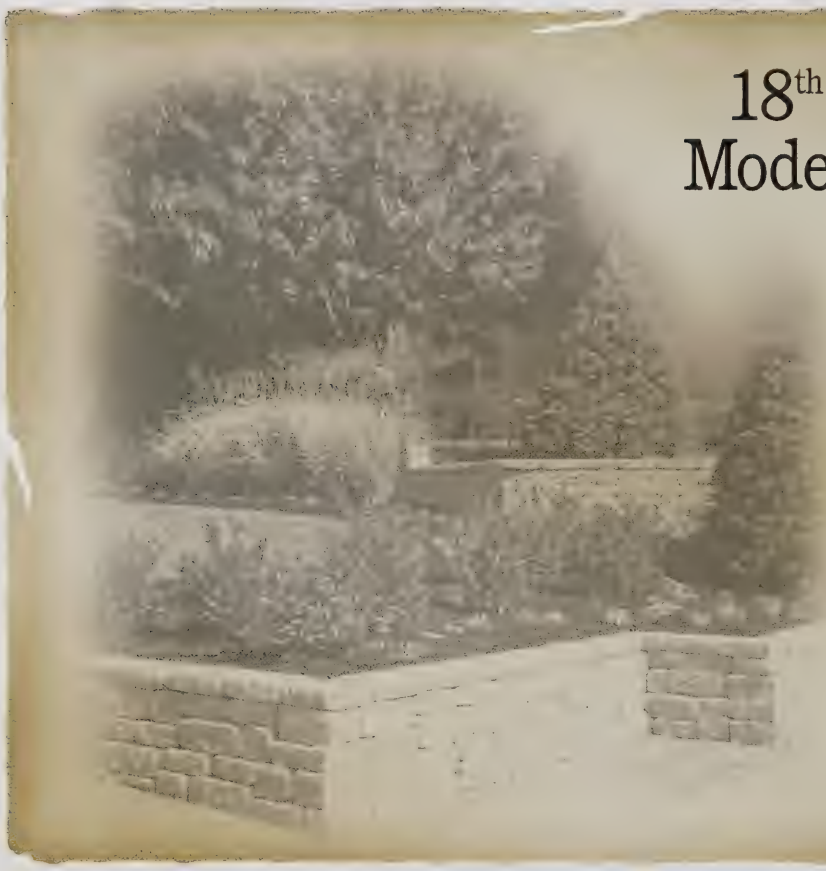

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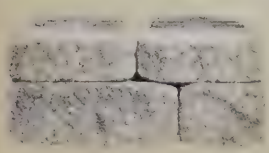

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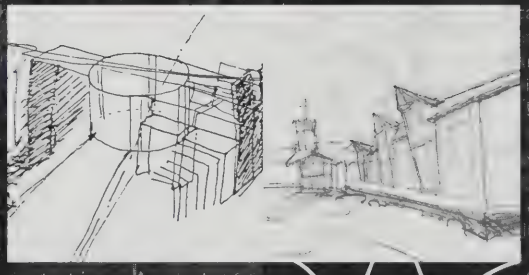

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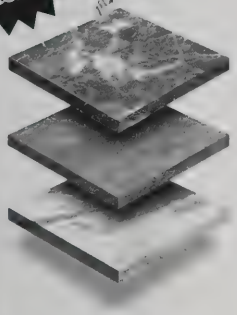

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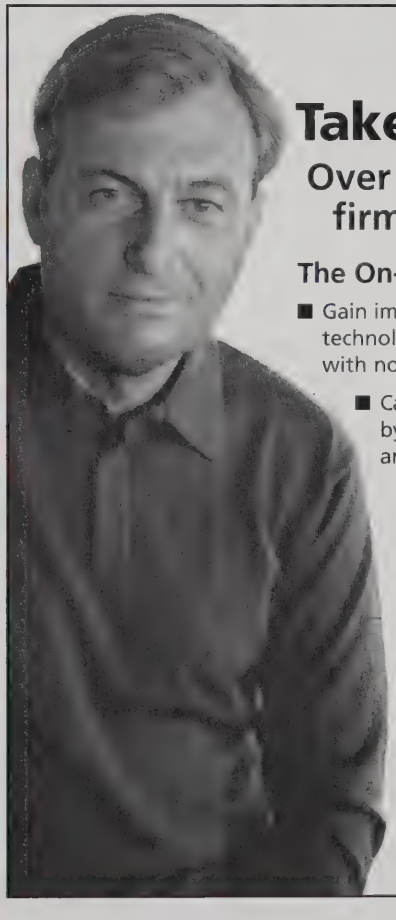

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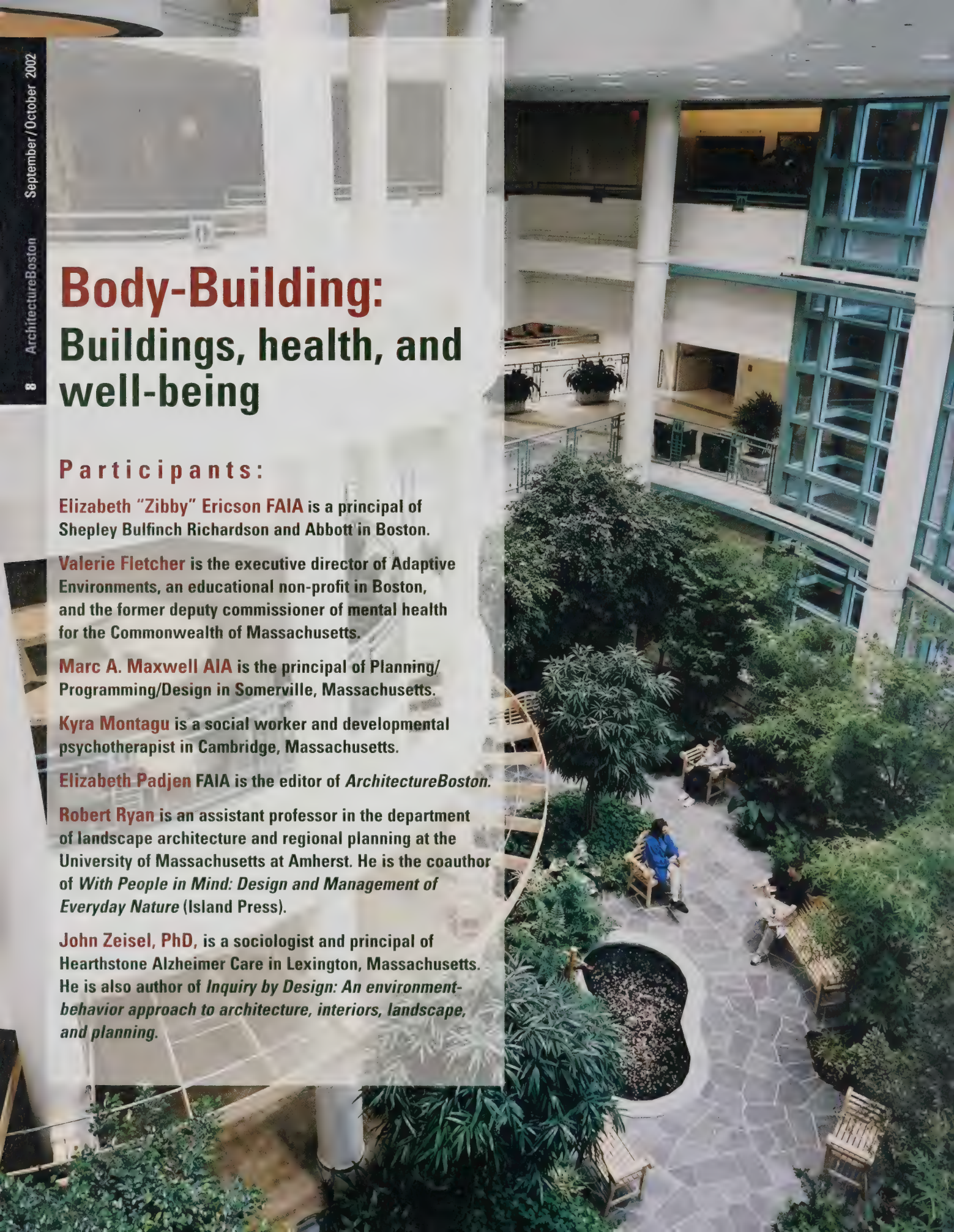

Participants:

Elizabeth "Zibby" Ericson FAIA is a principal of Shepley Bulfinch Richardson and Abbott in Boston.

Valerie Fletcher is the executive director of Adaptive Environments, an educational non-profit in Boston, and the former deputy commissioner of mental health for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Marc A. Maxwell AIA is the principal of Planning/Programming/Design in Somerville, Massachusetts.

Kyra Montagu is a social worker and developmental psychotherapist in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Elizabeth Padjen FAIA is the editor of *ArchitectureBoston.*

Robert Ryan is an assistant professor in the department of landscape architecture and regional planning at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He is the coauthor of *With People in Mind: Design and Management of Everyday Nature* (Island Press).

John Zeisel, PhD, is a sociologist and principal of Hearthstone Alzheimer Care in Lexington, Massachusetts. He is also author of *Inquiry by Design: An environment-behavior approach to architecture, interiors, landscape, and planning.*

Padjen: As I began to research the subject that we're calling the "body-building connection" — the relationship between buildings and human health and well-being — I was startled to realize that this topic has not received much academic attention in this region. Here we are in one of the world's great medical research centers and in one of the great centers of architectural education. Isn't it odd that there doesn't seem to be much cross-fertilization between them? Can you suggest any reasons for this disconnect?

Ryan: I can offer one reason why I think it's missing in design education. Most design awards, in both architecture and landscape architecture, seem to come to those who give beautiful form to spaces and not to beautiful places for people. So I think the neglect of the physical and mental benefits of design on people is a reflection of the fact that the professions — or at least the people who give the awards — don't value the design of places that are really good for the people who are going to inhabit them. A lot of environmental psychologists, architects, and environmental-design researchers have worked on these issues at institutions in other regions. For example, researchers William Sullivan and Francis Kuo at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign did some really groundbreaking studies of public housing to understand the benefits of having trees and open spaces. And they found that buildings that had trees and open space had less crime and violence than those that did not; they had more sense of community, less Attention Deficit Disorder among the school children. We as planners, architects, and landscape architects can learn a lot more from these kinds of studies.

Padjen: I'm curious about the history of this field of study. How far along is it in its maturity?

Zeisel: This is actually a very old field — it had a presence in all the design schools in the Boston area in the 1970s. Environmental psychology actually had its birth here. The first environmental psychology conference — what later grew into EDRA, the Environmental Design Research Association — was in 1969 at MIT. The interesting question is, Why isn't it here any more? I believe two things happened. First, it was a fad. People said, "We want to have those environmental psychologists around" — that was when I was hired to teach at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. Then the fad changed, and designers moved on, saying, "Let's not have sociologists and psychologists; let's have computer experts." The other thing that happened is that we were successful. Lots of designers studied these issues and put what they learned into practice. They're just no longer calling themselves environmental psychologists. It's gone into the design mainstream.

Maxwell: It may be in the mainstream, but from a practice standpoint, it takes a very special client who allows a designer to explore environmental issues and the connection between the occupants and the space that you create. In my experience, the average client thinks that this will slow the process down. I've had the same reaction from other architects. When you start being specific about how environments fit users, you're talking about non-standard solutions, spaces that might not, for example, fit into repetitive bays as easily as they did before you started this level of conversation. You really have to have someone who is obsessed with quality and the fit between the product and its users.

Padjen: Who drives this kind of discussion when it does occur? Is it the client? The architect? The building occupants?

It takes a very special client who allows a designer to explore environmental issues and the connection between the occupants and lthe space that you create.

—Marc Maxwell AIA

Facing page
Bronson Methodist Hospital
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Architect
Shapley Bollhoefer Schermerhorn and Albert

The light-filled atrium alleviates the stress and anxiety often associated with the hospital setting.

Ericson: I'm going to put a plug in for architects because I think we operate out of intuition about making places. We are a learning lab. Our biggest problem is how to communicate this information — how to talk to clients in a way that's believable. It's hard to find hard data. Trying to quantify intuition is very difficult. When I start to design a hospital, I say, "What's really necessary is a garden." Literally a garden. And then I work hard to explain that this is a source of healing. Sometimes I succeed and sometimes I don't.

Maxwell: I agree with you, in that a lot of what we portray to our clients is anecdotal — we've had a good experience doing something and we think we can replicate it in another project. But when you say we can't quantify it, I disagree. It just takes an extraordinary amount of time and analysis to do it. And then the question becomes, What do you do with the information once you have it?

Ericson: True. But it's hard to find the data in the first place.

Maxwell: And it's hard to find a client who's willing to pay you to go out and get it.

Ryan: There's already 30 years of research on the very issues that Zibby mentioned. It shows, for example, that prisoners with garden views get out sooner for good behavior. Office workers with daylight and views of nature are more productive and have less absenteeism and job turnover. And there are health benefits in hospitals where patients have green views. But it takes time for practicing architects and landscape architects to go through the journals to find all this.

Zeisel: Designers tend to misuse the word "experiment" when they say they've tried something. An experiment requires measurement; otherwise, it's an adventure. But it is interesting to consider how an idea gets introduced. First of all it has to be in the general culture. In other words, 35 years ago when we all did this stuff, we were fighting an uphill battle. But popular culture now generally accepts the fact that good environments are healthy environments. The second way is through design professionals who embrace this information, not marginalize it as the work of specialists and consultants. And there is a growing number of such designers. The third is what Marc described — the organizational champion, somebody in the organization who says, "You mentioned gardens. I like that stuff. I saw it on CNN." With that, you can then say, "Let's look at the research." And then there's good and bad research. Probably 99 percent of it is anecdotal. But that's good enough for many design situations; it's better than none.

Designers tend to misuse the word "experiment" when they say they've tried something. An experiment requires measurement; otherwise, it's an adventure.

— John Zeisel, PhD

Ericson: I'll share a success story of a project I worked on, because I think it's an example of all those. It's a large community hospital in Michigan. The hospital decided it was going to completely reinvent its culture and its mission. And so we started talking about holistic design. Nobody quite knew what that meant. But to them and to us it came to mean "mind, body, and spirit" and how that might infuse the design. The idea went beyond the physical building. It went into the community. We all asked, How can we address the needs of the individual, the family, and the community? One of their biggest decisions was to stay downtown. Then they decided to rehab some houses on the site and move them to another place in town and make them affordable housing. And then they decided that the street system around the hospital was a killer. Literally — people took their lives in their hands trying to find the front door. The hospital took on its environment — not just in terms of what would make the doctors or nurses or even the patients happy, but in terms of what would make the community well. What would make the community thrive? That kind of thinking began to infiltrate the program for the new facility. I used that argument to make my case for a garden — for a while, I was known as Sister Joy. When I told them I would like 5,000 square feet for a garden, they said, "Which cures the patient more? The physician in the OR or the patient in the garden?"

Zeisel: And I hope you said, "the patient in the garden."

Fletcher: Who set the course for all this?

Ericson: It was an example of the organizational champion, initially the president, Pat Ludwig. Unfortunately, he died in the early stages of the project; you could feel the air go out of the balloon. But people stepped up. An administrator became the new champion. Then the new president, who initially worried about details like whether there was enough wainscoting, got to the point where he couldn't care less about wainscoting and instead wondered if there would be joy in the building. The result was an amazing

Office renovation, DEGW London

Architect: DEGW

DEGW is a large architecture, planning, and interiors firm whose founders include Francis Duffy RIBA, a pioneer in the application of behavioral and environmental research to the workplace. DEGW's own office has served as a laboratory for examining the design process and for evaluating POE (post-occupancy evaluation) methodologies!)

photo: Dennis Gilbert / View, courtesy John Zeisel

institutional transformation that was carried through even into details like clothing. If you are a nurse, you wear one color, a doctor, another color, an orderly, yet another color. It's not a class system — it's a demonstration of respect for the patients, to help them make sense of a very confusing environment.

Fletcher: I think part of the problem is that we lack a shared language for these kinds of discussions — whether they are discussions with colleagues or clients. Post-occupancy evaluation — studying the building in use — is probably the most significant research piece that can be done, something that might provide information of common interest. But there's no emphasis on its value or on the potential of rapid replication of good ideas in new buildings. I am always looking at cross-cultural differences in perspective on these issues. I note our American colleagues, particularly in architecture, have fallen short of being able to embrace a notion of human-centered problem-solving. Because architecture here is regulated by compliance codes, the unintended consequence is that designers feel that their duty to provide creative solutions to user-centered problems is somehow relieved, or perhaps overridden, by the burden of their obligations to meet the requirements of the law. It seems to shoot down the user interface with the environment as a source of creativity.

Ericson: I agree. Standards can be valuable, but they can "dumb down" our thinking. We should think more about performance measures and less about arbitrary regulations. A successful response to performance standards requires a different kind of knowledge and creativity. I'll offer an example from my own experience. Elaine Ostroff, the former director of Adaptive Environments, invited me to participate on an awards jury for successful adaptive environments. Elaine wouldn't let us simply look at photographs. She said, "Oh, no. You are going out to meet these people, and you're going to test all these places with them." And what an education I got — I've never forgotten it. I went with a blind person to a building that had a circular interior corridor, and she could not find her way in that building at all. She said, "I can't hear" — because all of the sounds of people walking on the hard surfaces were bouncing off the curve and creating acoustical noise that she could not navigate through at all. It had nothing to do with lack of sight; it was an acoustic battle that the architect had created. Frankly, I would not be sensitive to that condition at all if I hadn't had this learning experience.

Maxwell: I'd like to amplify that. I gave a eulogy recently for a friend who had great physical disabilities and was a brilliant and gentle person. Before he died, I met an architect from a major firm who was doing some very specific design work for this person, an ADA-compliant private

Bronson Methodist Hospital
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Architect:
Shapley Bulfinch Richardson and Abbott

Natural light filters through in specially designed patterns to create clear wayfinding

(Photo: Peter Mauss/Esto)

restroom for him. At the beginning of my conversation with this architect, I asked him if he'd met the gentleman for whom he was tailoring this space. He had not — he was getting his information through the facilities manager of the law firm who was getting it from.... You know how these things get handed off. If you looked at this individual, you would change your entire approach to the design. Facilities managers are charged with meeting the letter of the law and doing it fast and cheap. But how can we do this work and not say, "What's the issue for *this* individual?"

Montagu: People have to know the population for whom they're designing. Even if you look only at healthcare facilities, there are great differences between designing for someone in a traumatized state and designing for someone who's beginning to recuperate. The requirements in both cases are quite different. One demands safety and protection; the other demands inspiration and stimulation.

Padjen: How well do you think architects understand that?

Fletcher: I'd say there are some great successes and some great failures. We see successes in Alzheimer's care, where we have people who are exceptionally vulnerable. The power of the environment to shape their daily existence is something that has come to be accepted. We see excellent outpatient design, particularly in oncology centers, and we see it in maternity centers, because we know that women think carefully about the experience of childbirth and choose where they want to be. But I think any one of us could spend time strolling through the general hospitals in this town and be very disappointed by the lack of attention paid to the experience, from walking in the door to making our way through the hospital. There is persistent inattention to the user experience in our healthcare settings. And these are powerful places that touch each of our lives.

Zeisel: It's more than a question of design when it comes to large institutions like hospitals. It's a problem within the medical profession, within the healthcare system, with the client. These are large institutions that have no organizational champion for

high-quality, human-centered design. It's an uphill battle. By contrast, developers of office buildings now talk about the relationship between the quality of the office building and the productivity and the health of the tenants. It's marketing. Hospitals don't make that argument because the medical profession does not see itself as a business culture. With the exception of the special services you mention, where competition is strong and consumers have clear choices, healthcare culture generally is not oriented toward the individual or the consumer. It's oriented toward illness and the tasks of treating illness.

Padjen: We've been talking about designing for special needs and for people who are healing. What about designing for well-being? What are the lessons of designing for special needs or healthcare environments that can be applied to the broader environment?

Ryan: I used to tell my students, if you can design for children and the elderly, then you've got a lot better chance of designing well for the spectrum in between.

Montagu: One of the defining characteristics of the natural environment is diversity. But we don't fully understand what that means and what it might mean in the built environment. One of the flaws in most hospitals, it seems to me, is that they have a monolithic character that makes them very unfriendly to users.

Fletcher: That is a really central point. At Adaptive Environments, we are zealots and proselytizers for two things. One is the power of design to fundamentally alter our daily human experiences and the second is the mutability of the human condition. There could be nothing more ordinary than the inherent diversity of being human, whether that is cultural diversity, diversity of ability, diversity of age, appetite, whatever. There is nothing more human than variety. How do we translate that human vitality to our environment through design?

Padjen: Think about two words or phrases that entered the vocabulary of designers at about the same time. One is "sustainability," the other is "universal design." They both represent changes in thinking, toward what might be called a more ethical, responsible kind of design. Universal design is especially interesting because it represented a fundamental change in attitude from "design for the handicapped" — where the handicapped population was "the other" — to an understanding that we all have limitations in varying degrees at varying points in our lives. Suddenly we all got to a point where we realized "the other" could be us.

Maxwell: I think there have been many unanticipated good outcomes from what was "handicapped design." The seniors housing and assisted-living projects that I work on today are entirely different from what they were 15 years ago. Fifteen years ago, I argued with every client about 36-inch-wide doors. They all had doors that were 30 inches and bathroom doors that were 27 inches because that was considered "residential." Architects fought about including ramps 10 years ago; now they are everywhere. I actually think that the skateboard park came out of ADA — the ramps that we build can be joyful. And so there are many things that have changed, and of course, lots of work still to be done.

We've seen some crossover between the trend to design more environmentally friendly buildings and the design of healthful buildings that respond to the physical needs of the occupants. Firms that focus on sustainability are more likely to also focus on universal design. I believe that much of the interest in these fields initially came from people with particular health issues. Attention to indoor air quality started because some people got sick who had the resources or the tenacity or the knowledge to go out and say there's a problem here, what's the root cause, and how do we solve it? And that kind of thinking became a trend. Green architecture was once a fringe movement and now it's mainstream.

Zeisel: I would like to make an argument for how we should address these issues. It's a matter of strategy. Buckminster Fuller told the story about how he intended to kill himself at an early age because he was spending so much time trying to convince others to be an audience for his ideas, but people weren't listening to him. He went to the edge of the ocean and was going to drown himself. Then he realized that if he was willing to kill himself, he should be able to live just talking to people who *wanted* to listen to him. And he made a commitment to himself, which has changed my life since I heard him talk about it many years ago, that he would never talk to anybody who didn't want to listen. And that was the way to his success. We can either continue talking about all the people who aren't doing what we consider to be important, or we can build on the stories of the success of the people who are. There are countless examples. Wolfgang Preiser and Elaine Ostroff just edited the *Universal Design Handbook* — it has a totally different perspective on

There is persistent inattention to the user experience in our healthcare settings. And these are powerful places that touch each of our lives.

— Valerie Fletcher

Library, Hillsdale College
Hillsdale, Michigan

Buildings providing views of nature promote more sense of community, less crime and violence, and less Attention Deficit Disorder among school children.

photo courtesy Robert Ryan

universal design. There is of course, Clare Cooper Marcus' newest book, *Healing Gardens: Therapeutic Benefits and Design Recommendations* and her classic text, *Housing As If People Mattered*. The International Academy for Design and Health, of which I'm chair of the Advisory Board, is having a conference in Montreal in June 2003. There's the "Synergy" conference in Sydney, Australia on art, design and health in February 2003. The International Federation on Aging is holding a conference with a focus on universal design in Perth, Australia in October 2002. This is a huge amount of information – it's out there. There are thousands of people attending these events from around the world. What's important now is to recognize that there's a whole movement out there. We can carry on, and we don't need to talk to the people who are not interested.

Fletcher: I think the one area where I would take issue with you is design education.

Zeisel: Absolutely. I agree that major work still needs to be done in education.

Fletcher: If young people who are passionate about design are not given the appreciation for where this fits into their sense of professional and personal values, then we will have missed a generation. We'll miss the integration of these values into their sense of self and their professional expertise, and that's a tragic gap. And unfortunately, I think we're still seeing a presumption in the schools that design quality is somehow diminished by a focus on the user experience.

Maxwell: There's often a disconnect in the schools, a focus on design that does not value the participation of people other than designers, administrators, and politicians. The only place you get away from that is in planning or urban design programs.

Ryan: And yet, if we involve the users in the design process, the final product will be something they have a stronger attachment to because it fulfills their needs, so they'll be better stewards of it.

Ericson: I think that by using the word "user," we're not really conveying our message. It's a very one-dimensional word. And now we're talking about the user and the designer, so we've got two people involved. But in fact there is also a world that is involved. We need to come up with a different way of talking, because we live in a very multidimensional, interconnected world.

Maxwell: One of the issues that we really have to address is the fact that the "users" — the residents, the occupants — are often not the paying client. The office worker, the school child, the hospital patient — all these people are the ultimate users of our spaces. They're hardly ever the architect's direct client, but they are the ultimate client. And so we do have to broaden our definitions and our understanding of who it is that we work for.

Ericson: One way to do that is by building alliances. We could work with organizations like Adaptive Environments, as people to talk to regularly. We could have resource groups of people with various disabilities to talk to about our designs. We could then create a community of learners, learning about how we live, and how we want to improve our environments, and how design influences our lives.

Montagu: It seems that you're advocating shifting the politics of the design process. How do you communicate to potential clients the need to bring more players to the table?

Maxwell: The organizational champions understand that. When Zibby was describing her hospital project, my thought was that either the building committee included a lot of people who were not only board members, or that the board membership was very broad. There were lots of different people with varying perspectives in that process. You are right — it is political at one level, although I think the politics vary with the type of building.

Ryan: But I do think we need to broaden our thinking beyond the people who physically inhabit the space — the office workers or the residents. I've done it in park research, where I try to look at what I call the "involvement continuum" — the people who just drive by the park or see it from their house versus those who are actually using the park, jogging, or planting flowers. Similarly, I would think of the users of a building as including the people who drive or walk by it every day but never set foot in it. Somehow that building has an impact on their landscape. You might also include people who are linked to a building conceptually but don't inhabit it. For example, parents whose kids go to school. The parents never physically inhabit the space, but they're very concerned about what kind of building their kids inhabit.

Fletcher: And, to complicate matters, there is the question of life span. Our life spans are much longer on average than they were 100 years ago, which has implications for how we interact with our environment at different points in our lives. We as individuals are always changing. And there is also the question of building life span — one building may touch many lives in many different ways in the course of its history.

Montagu: And that makes a fundamental difference in our expectations. Based both on architectural details and on our own memories and associations, we encounter these environments with specific expectations, which are often culturally determined as much as achieved through design.

Maxwell: Different populations expect different things. Office workers expect ideal lighting and room temperature, that the piston on their chair will work every time they sit down, that their monitor turns on every time they hit the switch. It's a 100-percent expectation. I don't think we have that level of expectation in our homes. In our home environment, a crack in the wall is not the same thing as it is in a hotel room.

Ryan: And expectations vary around the world in terms of culture and regulation. In Germany, every office worker needs to be within something like 30 feet of a natural daylight source. So they consider natural daylight to be a right, not a privilege.

Zeisel: We still have to invest in research to prove the value of some of these assumptions. We believe them, which is fine. We're in a country where a lot of people believe in weird stuff these days. I'm not sure, for example, that the German belief is better than our belief. What we don't have is all the research that proves it. There's a huge difference in the amount of money that is spent on drug research compared to the amount that's invested to look at the impact of the physical environment on health.

Maxwell: Is that because we don't have the methodology to study it? These are questions that are hard to administer to a double-blind, placebo-based, longitudinal study of 2,000 people.

Zeisel: You're right — we can't, for example, prove the case for daylight by providing daylight for 1,000 people and providing no daylight for another 1,000 people. But we can find appropriate methods, and we're working on changing the paradigm for research. One thing is to build on the success stories, as I said earlier. The second is to start putting

I think of the users of a building as including the people who drive or walk by it every day but never set foot in it. Somehow that building has an impact on their landscape.

— Robert Ryan

forward the idea that architects, designers in general, as one of their volunteer efforts, should do evaluations and collect data and share it. We now have the tools to do it and we know that they work.

Ericson: And I suspect there are questions that we are just beginning to ask, let alone devise research strategies for. I, for example, am interested in the concept of environmental memory. To take an example, if you are in a building where you know there have been four different restaurants that you can remember by name, and the person next to you only knows it as a new restaurant, what's the difference in how you feel about your environment? Does knowing the history of a place give you a more stable viewpoint of the world or not? It has fascinating implications. Let's say, for example, that you're in a ravaged area, like Bosnia, where the environment has been obliterated — will that in itself induce traumatic stress syndrome?

Montagu: Are you familiar with cultural mapping? It's very interesting. There was a project sponsored by a group called Eco-Trust who studied an aboriginal group in British Columbia who finally regained control of their land. It was one of the few land re-settlements ever to happen in British Columbia. But nobody had a memory of what had been there, just what they could reconstruct from a few vestiges. So they did a wonderful project to map all the uses of this land that could be recollected. Young kids interviewed elders and their memories were layered individually on top of the topographical map and later used for planning ecosystem reclamation for ecotourism. This process is now being replicated everywhere. You mentioned Bosnia — it's now being used with refugees who return to places where there are conflicting claims about whose house was where. And it's a very interesting approach to the kind of research you're talking about that might have physical or mental health implications.

Zeisel: Neuroscience is also looking at these questions and I believe this effort is going to be a big part of the future of what here is being called "the body-building connection." There are some questions we can't yet answer, for example, do our brains work differently if we're living in an elderly housing project in the building where we attended elementary school? But today we know a lot more about how the environment supports the function of the brain. There is a connection. We now know that if you put children with Attention Deficit Disorder into physical environments that work better for them — that are more understandable and safer — they won't have ADD any more.

Fletcher: There's an implication here for the research funding issue we discussed earlier. There is a lot of funding focusing on the technology of mapping what's going on in our brains, applying digitalization to the way information is processed in the brain. We can actually measure the "firings" of the brain. That has not been applied to our environmental response, or specifically to the power of design on our response to our environment.

Zeisel: That's because it's easier to test people lying down for an MRI scan. But clearly, MRI and PET scans are the future in terms of the kind of research we're talking about. We know about the connection between ADD and physical environments. We know there's a relationship between Alzheimer's and the environment. This is just the beginning.

Ryan: A lot of the research I've seen has to do with the importance of plants and temperature and natural environments for limiting ADD and similar conditions. I think the jury's still out on how well — or how much — the environment needs to be "designed." It's the natural environments that make a difference. The research has not yet demonstrated a need for designed environments.

Fletcher: But the time is coming when we will know the answer to that. We'll be walking around with chip technology implanted in our brains that will allow researchers to do the kinds of measurements we need. And as we move toward performance measures and away from regulatory standards, we'll be better able to integrate new research with the designed environment.

Ericson: Technology aside, at some level, we're talking about experiential design — understanding the experience of the people we are designing for and responding creatively to specific circumstances.

Zeisel: And I believe there's a large group of people who already believe in these things. It's taken 30 years to get here. But it's here. ■■■

Technology aside, at some level, we're talking about experiential design — understanding the experience of the people we are designing for and responding creatively to specific circumstances.

— Zibby Ericson FAIA

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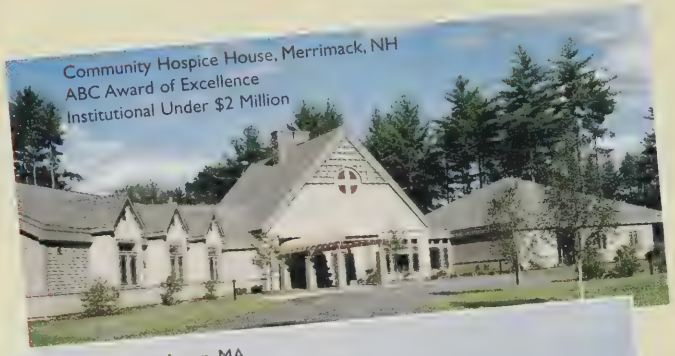

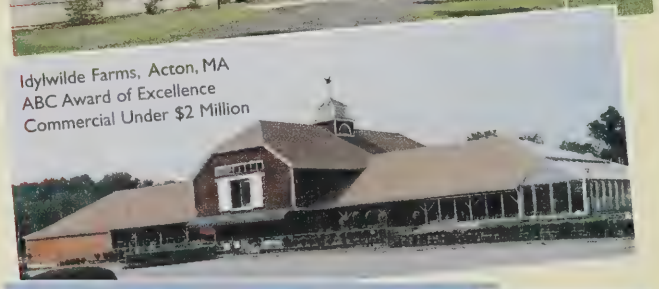

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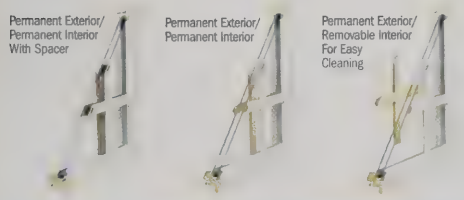
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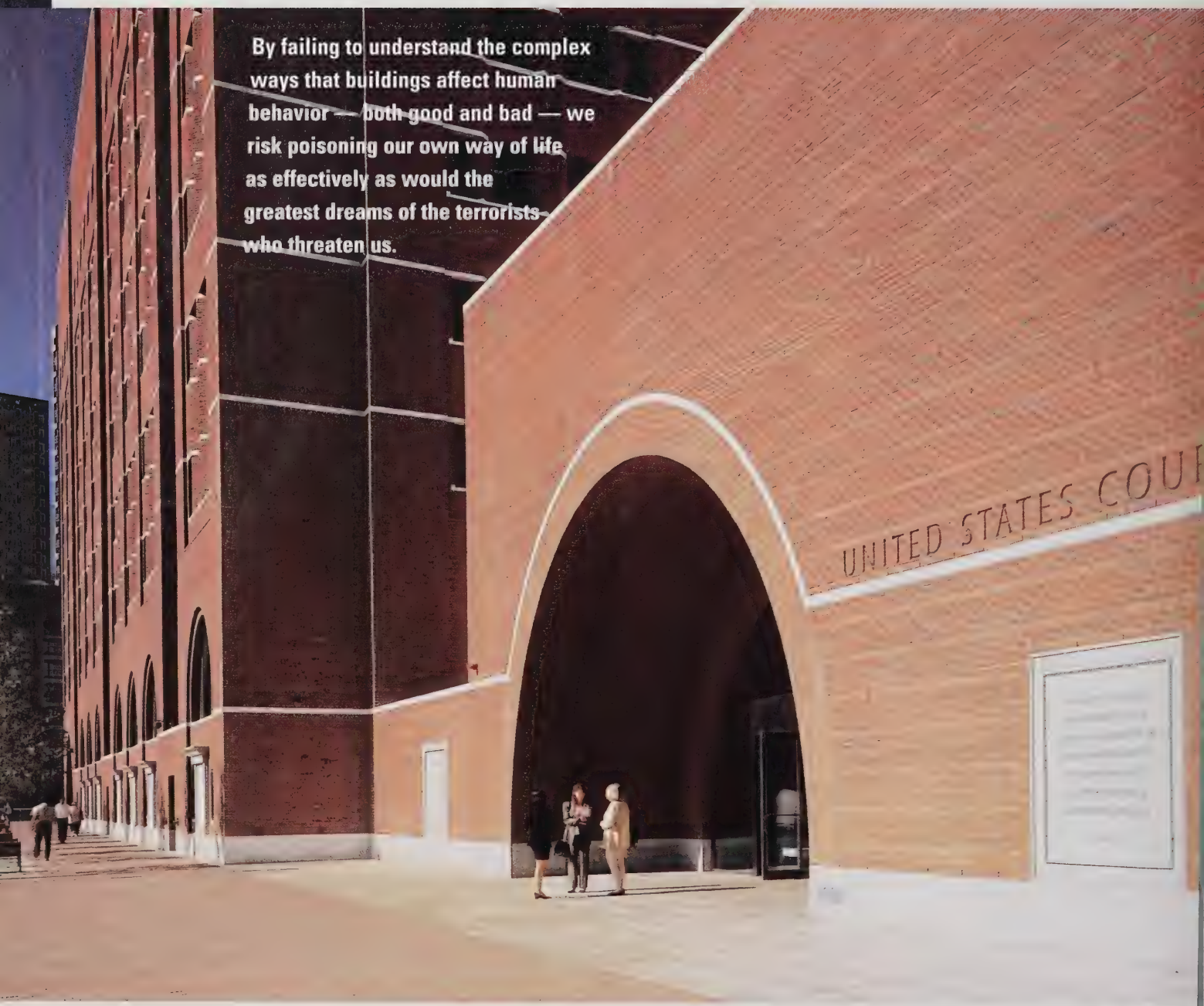
Building the Bunker:
Defensible space and defensive behavior

by David Dixon FAIA



By failing to understand the complex ways that buildings affect human behavior — both good and bad — we risk poisoning our own way of life as effectively as would the greatest dreams of the terrorists who threaten us.

America's sense of vulnerability following September 11 threatens to convert a war against terrorism into a war against the livability of America's own cities.

Our current sense of unease is not a new phenomenon. The 1973 oil embargo unleashed a profound sense of vulnerability in America. A colleague recalls, without fondness, her quaint Connecticut community's response to the embargo: joining many other communities in banishing windows from new schools. To a society single-mindedly focused on conserving energy, that windowless school symbolized patriotism and civic responsibility. In retrospect, that school also symbolized an aberration, a sense that energy conservation trumped the qualities that make schools nurturing places for learning.

September 11 unleashed a new sense of American vulnerability. Federal agencies, city and state governments, insurance companies, and other players are busy spinning a web of planning and design regulations intended to help defend against terrorism. The goals are benign: reduce the likelihood of terrorist attacks and the resulting loss of life and property. The means are straightforward: create 100-foot "security perimeters" around buildings free of vehicles or people (who might carry bombs); control access to targets by eliminating multiple entries; "harden" buildings to withstand blasts by measures such as requiring thick walls with fewer windows and eliminating most windows at street level.

By failing to understand the complex ways that buildings affect human behavior — both good and bad — we risk poisoning our own way of life as effectively as would the greatest dreams of the terrorists who threaten us. New regulations threaten to endow America with a new generation of buildings like the windowless school in Connecticut: civic icons hidden behind solid blast-resistant walls; important cultural and commercial landmarks isolated within lifeless zones free of vehicles or people; and government offices and courthouses scattered to low-density suburban and rural sites. The public realm will suffer, too, if city streets and squares become less safe by eliminating the windows and doorways that promote interaction between buildings and streets. And since no one can define what constitutes a potential target, America faces an endless list: courthouses, embassies, landmarks, city halls and state houses, iconic office towers and other highly visible symbols; important institutions like museums and universities; popular attractions like theme parks, athletic events, and festivals; and key infrastructure, including airports, water systems, power grids, and bridges. Because the list is endless, the impact of new regulations can be limitless.

Over the past two decades, American cities have emerged from a long night of defensive planning and design in which fear of crime, decay, and unfamiliar diversity reshaped the heart of many great cities into bleak, unwelcoming environments. In contrast, the 1980s and '90s were marked by projects like Boston's revitalized South Station and Rowes Wharf, which broke down the barriers between public and private. In the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan went a step further and urged Americans to commit themselves to creating buildings and public spaces that embody this country's civic and democratic values. The response to September 11 threatens to undermine this commitment in three key areas:

Fostering community. Henry Cobb FAIA, the architect of Boston's new federal courthouse, which occupies a magnificent waterfront site at Fan Pier, designed a winter garden overlooking the harbor and downtown to house public events. I was asked at a conference of architects whether the events of September 11 had diminished public use of this space. The immediate answer was: Yes. The more important answer, however, was that the courthouse already symbolized how security concerns diminish a lively public realm that fosters community. Sitting on the principal pedestrian route between the Financial District and the new Seaport District, the courthouse turns a blank wall to the street for an entire city block, placing the building in splendid isolation, dampening nearby public life, and severing the two districts it was meant to connect.

In sharp contrast, the Massachusetts State Transportation Building in Boston, which opened in 1983, embodies community-friendly design: a mix of uses, including shops, services, and restaurants to revitalize Boston's Park Square; parking hidden below the building; and a fully public interior "square" enlivened by cafés, entertainment, and steady pass-through traffic from multiple entrances. These qualities also happen to be the hallmarks of "defensible space" — Oscar

Facing page:
The John Joseph Moakley US Courthouse, Boston

Architect:
Pei Cobb Freed & Partners in association with Jung/Brannen Associates

The US Courthouse in Boston already symbolizes how security concerns diminish an architecture that that fosters community and a lively public realm.

Newman's term for his respected observation that an active, people-filled public realm is a powerful tool for promoting public safety. Eli Naor, a California architect who grew up in Israel, told me that throughout its years of crisis, Israel has remained committed to buildings and public spaces that promote community. Faced with terrorist bombings, cities like Madrid and Paris have not closed important public buildings off from streets and squares.

Fighting sprawl. Last October, "Today Show" co-host Katie Couric asked George Thrush AIA, director of Northeastern University's architecture program, whether "the war on terrorism means the end of towers." In December, Steven Johnson, writing in *Wired* magazine, suggested that "if there are to be new rules for the new warfare, one of the first is surely this: Density kills." And in a recent issue of *Architectural Record*, noted architect Leon Krier suggested that the high death toll associated with the attack on the World Trade Center argues for lower buildings.

George Thrush answered Katie Couric by pointing out that "we are also fighting another war, on sprawl" and that "towers represent an important alternative to sprawl because they help achieve urban densities." In most regions, sprawl is also a threat. The number of miles people drive each year in metropolitan Boston has increased more than 15 times faster than population growth since 1970. Suburban shopping centers continue to drain life from older Main Streets, and sprawl is reinforcing racial and economic segregation. These trends are being repeated across the country. Security-driven steps such as decentralizing public employees, placing large, empty setbacks between buildings and sidewalks, and avoiding height when land is scarce, all undermine essential tools for fighting sprawl: focusing growth toward developed areas and reestablishing the traditional densities necessary to support urban Main Streets and public transit.

Revitalizing older communities. For years, the federal General Services Administration (GSA) has been the sponsor of the only significant new investment in many older communities, because of its policy of locating post offices on older Main Streets, courthouses and federal office buildings in older downtowns, and federal office buildings in high-unemployment communities. In Boston, the O'Neil Federal Office Building led the way to revitalization of the Bulfinch Triangle in the 1980s. For many older downtowns, new public buildings represent the only hope for new investment.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms committed to building a new office building in a depressed part of downtown Washington, DC. Following September 11, the Bureau added a security requirement: a 100-foot *pedestrian-free* perimeter zone. Although the continued commitment to an urban site is commendable, this setback and similar security requirements spell the end of locating public offices, courthouses, and other buildings with significant security concerns in older downtowns. These buildings — along with their associated jobs, disposable income, and demand for housing, indirect tax revenue, and many other benefits — will be forced outward to remote suburban sites.

Postscript: Where do we go from here?

Following Oklahoma City, architects designed artful "hardened streetscapes" for the Federal Triangle in Washington, DC. Innovative benches, bollards, and streetlights, together with more street trees (a "hardened" tree presumably is a larger tree) will protect civic buildings and enhance the public realm, pre-empting far more drastic proposals to ban vehicles and people and erect walls around public buildings. To date, the debate about our physical response to terrorism has been dominated by security professionals and others with backgrounds in designing embassies and other buildings for which security is a paramount issue. The key to the Federal Triangle outcome was participation by a far wider array of architects, planners, preservation advocates, and people whose focus is the quality, character, and vitality of cities. We need a similarly broad-based national dialogue to ensure that we maintain our society's commitment to building livable communities as we respond to terrorism and that we avoid the single-minded response that brought a small Connecticut town its windowless school. ■■■

David Dixon FAIA is an urban designer and principal of Goody, Clancy & Associates in Boston, designers of many public buildings, including the Massachusetts State Transportation Building. He is the president-elect of the Boston Society of Architects.

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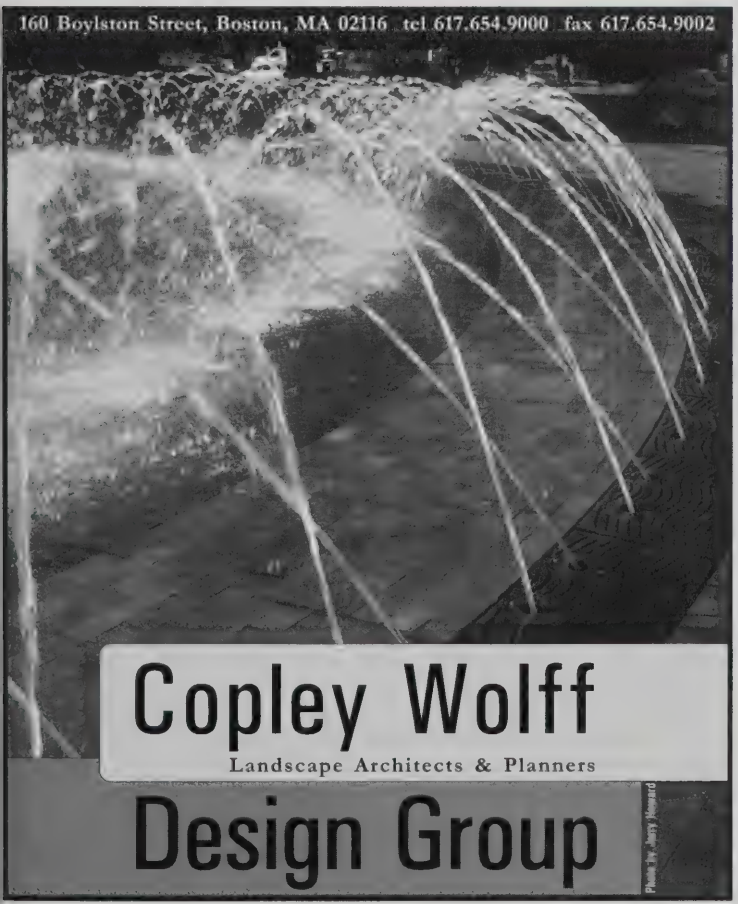
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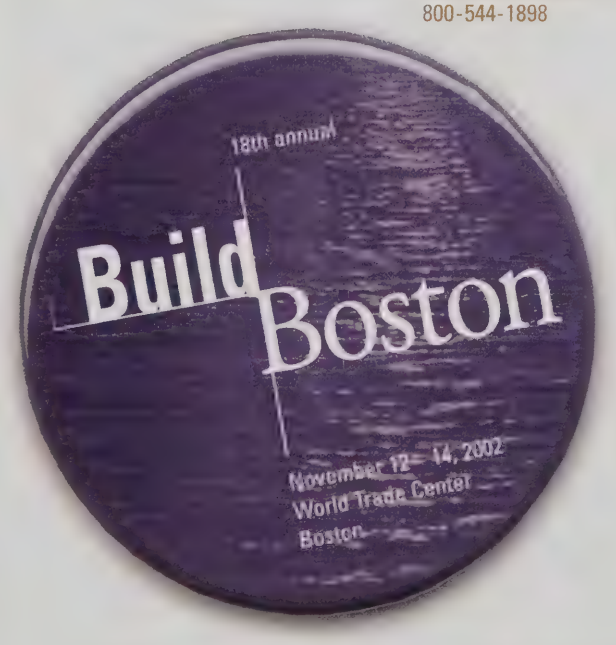

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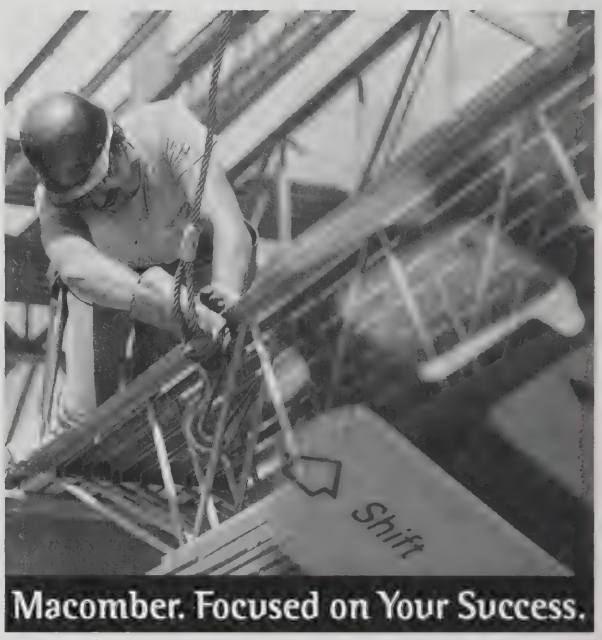

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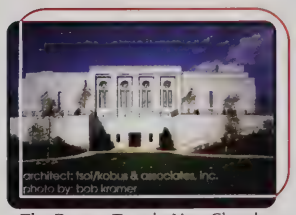

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A Green Grand Tour:

Lessons from Europe's best green buildings

by Bruce Coldham AIA

In April of 2000 I stumbled into a small exhibition at the Urban Center in New York City. Called "Ten Shades of Green," it featured a collection of elegantly designed buildings with ecological intelligence and integrity, almost all of them European. It proved to be an epiphany. Six months later, in the company of four friends, I spent three weeks touring 34 of the most celebrated green buildings in four European countries — Germany, Switzerland, Holland, and England. Our goals were to understand real design innovation as an architectural expression of ecological and environmental building; to unearth innovative, practical, and transferable green building strategies; and to separate the hype from the heroic.

Caveats

There are important differences between northern Europe and the US Northeast that affect building design. The climate of northern European is more moderate: temperatures seldom drop below freezing nor rise above 90 degrees Fahrenheit, and summer relative humidity is significantly lower.

Depending upon the location, buildings in the US Northeast need cooling and/or dehumidification during 6 percent of the hours of the year to retain comfortable conditions (and 4 percent of the hours represent conditions that are beyond the capability of passive design or passive technologies). In contrast, buildings in Frankfurt require cooling or dehumidification (either passive or mechanical) for fewer than half of 1 percent of the year.

There are important political and social differences, too. Europeans consider the control of carbon dioxide emissions to be a serious issue — one that receives the attention of government, the civil service, business and industry, and the electorate. They also have a greater

understanding of the value of long-term investment and, accordingly, buildings are designed and constructed to be more durable. **And Europeans appear to have a higher expectation that buildings will and should be healthful, pleasant, comfortable, and uplifting places.**

Observations

Most of the buildings we visited featured reinforced-concrete structural systems that were left exposed in otherwise finished, occupied spaces. Probably stemming from postwar shortages of steel, reinforced-concrete is commonly used in European buildings, which consequently have higher structural mass than their equivalents in this country. Buckminster Fuller asked "How much does your building weigh?" with an eye to shaming architects into designing low-mass structures. In Europe, the mass appears to earn its keep.

We were struck by the complete absence of suspended acoustic tile (SAT) ceilings. Elements such as air ducts, cable trays, conduits, and receptacle boxes were all commonly mounted and exposed in the finished space.

Not surprisingly, acoustical control is frequently a problem. There were interesting, and sometimes desperate, measures to introduce sound absorption elements, and there appears to be no consensus on how to manage sound attenuation — it varies according to the size and function of the space and the design sense of the architect. However, sound control is less of a challenge with the narrow plan forms (a high proportion of exterior wall to floor area) that we mostly encountered than it might be with the large, wide floorplates that are typical in many American office buildings.

A common feature of many buildings we visited was the complexity of façades, which routinely included exterior shades or brise-soleils (both fixed and movable), as well as interior blinds — all of which tended to suppress the interior daylighting levels. We initially found this curious in a part of the world with significantly lower solar intensity than in the US, but we gradually deduced the rationales behind them: the lower sun angles, the absence of winter icing, and a desire to diminish the high contrast between perimeter and internal daylighting levels — dispelling the perception of relative darkness and the consequent urge to turn on lights.

We saw some cleverly and carefully designed mechanical systems that reduced fan energy (a surprisingly big energy user in commercial buildings) to as little as one tenth that of typical US buildings. Some buildings use ventilation systems relying on gravity and wind for the power to move air — several using only these natural forces, while others combined mechanical and natural power.

The Queens Building (the School of Engineering) at De Montfort University in Leicester, England, uses ventilation towers to induce a natural air flow, producing dominant architectural elements in the building design and massing. In a different strategy, the Cable and Wireless building, in nearby Coventry, relies on cross ventilation because studies by consulting engineers at Arups found it to be a more effective ventilation strategy. That insight produced a sinuously curvaceous roof and a predominantly horizontal building form, avoiding the expensive ventilation towers, and demonstrating the architectonic opportunities associated with this natural ventilation strategy.

Wessex Water

Architect:
Rab Bennetts

Systems Engineer:
Buro Happold

Facing page:

Jubilee Campus of Nottingham University

Architect:
Michael Hopkins and Partners

Systems Engineer:
Arup

Below:

Cable and Wireless

Architect:
MacCormac Jamieson Pritchard

Systems Engineer:
Arups

photo: Bruce Coldham

Right:

Jubilee Campus of Nottingham University

Architect:
Michael Hopkins and Partners

Systems Engineer:
Arup

photo: Bruce Coldham

The Jubilee Campus complex of Nottingham University is an especially interesting building. It is not ventilated by natural means alone, but instead by a "mixed mode" system, which exploits a combination of three natural ventilation strategies (cross-ventilation, the stack effect, and a wind-capture technique), supplemented by fan power. The significant achievement of the Jubilee Campus is the reduction in fan power requirements to approximately one-tenth of what would be expected in a conventional building system. This is achieved by using the corridors, stairwells, and other large architectural spaces as "ducts" through which the supply and exhaust air moves, as well as by designing air bypasses for the cooling coils for the 99 percent of hours of the year when cooling is not required. The "mixed mode" allows for heat recovery which is impossible with fully natural ventilation systems. This approach probably has the greatest significance for integrating natural ventilation strategies in buildings in the United States.

Lessons

High-performing green European buildings have no unifying design character — other than the absence of SAT. They range in appearance from the highly resourceful glass box (Mader School in Austria) to the colorful and organically overgrown buildings by Joachim Eble — equally resourceful, though by different means.

The British building analyst Bill Bordass classifies buildings as either reliable "robust plateaux" or problematic "optimized pinnacles." The former are generally characterized by well insulated, airtight envelopes, façades that are glazed on less than half of their surfaces, significant interior mass, and few moving parts (as in sun-control devices). Bordass' second classification includes buildings that typically feature an excess of glazing requiring shades, operable windows, and the consequent complexity of controls necessary to avoid glare and interior temperature extremes.

Whichever model American architects follow, they would benefit from one characteristic that does unify all the projects we visited. Cost-effective, green buildings depend on interdisciplinary teams of mutually respectful design professionals. **The most successful projects were the products of thoroughly integrated design teams who had worked together through a succession of projects, fully engaged from the outset of each one.** The team approach eliminates the cost premium of creating green buildings by expanding the functional capabilities of various building components. Success requires innovation, which in turn requires design-team members to be fully supportive and trusting of one another. American architects are recognized internationally for their team-management skills. If we apply those skills to design collaboration, we will eliminate the need to buy a plane ticket to see outstanding examples of sustainable architecture. ■■■

Bruce Coldham AIA is a principal of Coldham Architects in Amherst, Massachusetts. He is an Australian who has practiced architecture in Australia and the UK before moving to the US. He has an MED from Yale and established his own firm in 1989, specializing in green buildings.

More information about the Green Grand Tour, including detailed performance reports on many of the buildings visited, is available on the Web at www.coldhamarchitects.com.

"Ten Shades of Green," the exhibition that inspired Coldham's Green Grand Tour, will be on view at the Boston Architectural Center, 320 Newbury Street, Boston, from September 23 to November 1. For more information, call 617-262-5000 or go to www.the-bac.edu.

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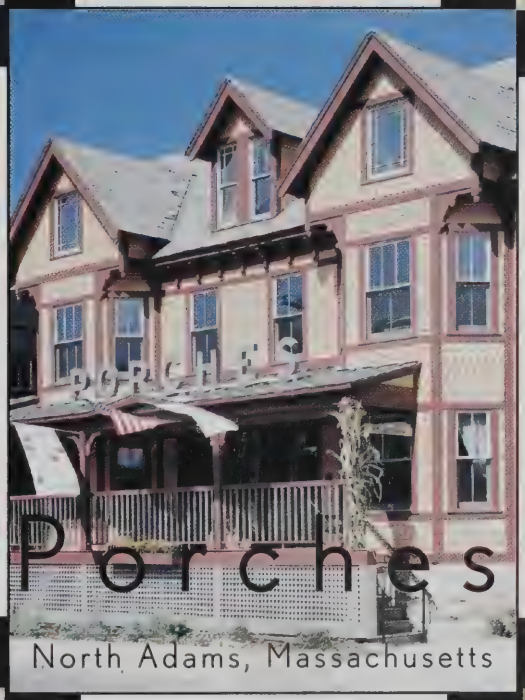

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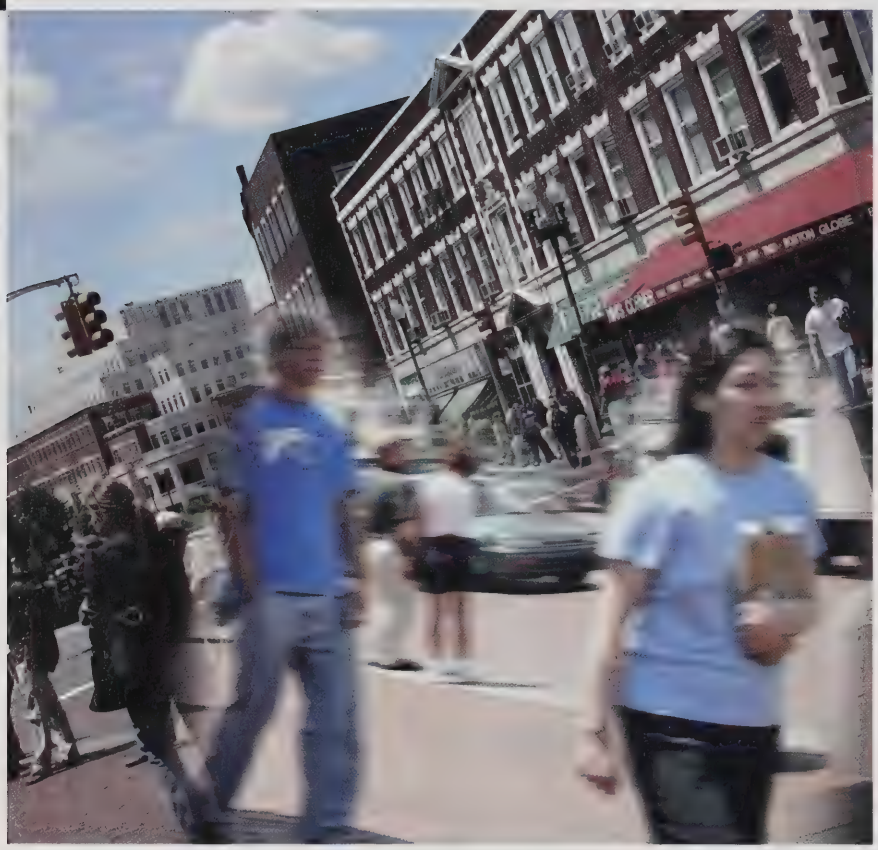
Where Am I?

The city as a place of healing

by Joan Wickersham



"Where am I?" That is the classic line, the question movie characters murmur when they wake up from comas. For days after my friend Keith fell fifty feet while hiking with his wife Jenny and their children, I dreamed of him waking up and asking that question. Someone had even hand-lettered a sign and hung it opposite his bed in the neurosurgery intensive care unit. It said:
**"YOU FELL AND HIT YOUR HEAD.
YOU ARE AT THE HOSPITAL."**

But he wasn't waking up. He was tossing on the bed, tethered to it by a straitjacket. He didn't recognize Jenny or his friends. He didn't respond when spoken to. His swollen head lolled back, forward, sideways. He was like something in orbit, abandoned, a piece of space junk.

Visitors came, cautiously cheerful, holding out flowers. They left looking gray and stunned. They were prepared to see him exhausted, confused, maybe flickering in and out of consciousness. They knew he would not be quite himself — but they hadn't understood that his self was absent, wandering in some inaccessible wilderness, gone. They came in hoping that their faces, their voices, their nervous, kind, nostalgic pep talks ("We've got to get you out of this bed in time for the history department softball game") would spark some recognition in him, remind him of who he was. But there was no one there to remind. The visitors left muttering about what horrible places hospitals are. He lay tied to the bed, his eyes rolling in his head, his old favorite Dylan song wailing out from the cassette player Jenny had brought in for him: *How does it feel / To be on your own / With no direction home / Like a complete unknown / Like a rolling stone?*

If he did actually wake up, and by some further miracle was still able to read, that sign was unlikely to clear up his confusion about what had happened to him. "You're in the hospital" wasn't an answer — it was a metaphorical restatement of the problem. Just as the injury to the left temporal lobe of his brain had struck at his individuality, so did the hospital. The depersonalization that is inherent in the hospital experience was an eerie mirror of the physical trauma he had suffered. A hospital is nowhere, cutting us off from everything that anchors us in our own identities: our families, jobs, possessions, routines, even our own particular annoyances and interruptions. How could anyone, waking up with a scrambled, wounded mind in a hospital, possibly figure out where he was?

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

The doctors were cold, noncommittal. Will he get better? we kept asking. They shrugged. One day he raised two fingers on command. We begged to be told that this was a good sign. The doctor shrugged. "A year from now he could be fine, or he could still be raising two fingers."

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Suddenly, he smiled at a friend. "I thought you were in Torontosaurus."

These were the first words he had spoken in the three weeks since the accident. "Thailand," she said gently. "I was in Thailand. I'm sorry, I'm crying."

"That's all right," he said drowsily. "I know they are tears of relief."

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

It was time to move him to rehab. Our neurologist friends all said it was important to find a sophisticated program. He was a history professor. It would take a lot of work to restore him to full function. If some of the circuitry of his brain was permanently damaged, he'd need to learn to compensate, to reroute the same mental challenges along new pathways. He was talking a little more each day, but he was still "off," a set of brilliant bits and pieces that needed to be knit back together into an entire person.

He was flown from Tennessee up to Boston, where he had once lived and still had many friends. The doctor in the great rehab hospital watched him keenly, asked many questions, treated him with respect. Then, just as we were relaxing at having delivered him to a safe haven, she kicked him out for the evening. "Take him home for dinner."

Driving with him was terrifying, like taking a newborn home from the hospital. Every pothole felt lethal; he seemed breakable. He sat in the back seat, wrapped in Jenny's arms. She had to show him how the seatbelt worked. "This is so weird," he kept saying, in his new speeded-up, faded voice. "I was walking with my family in the woods, and then the next thing I know, I'm in this place and they tell me I've had this huge injury. It's unreal. Like if I woke up and they said, 'You're pregnant. You're a man, but you're pregnant.' And then they say, 'Not only are you pregnant, but you're a policeman.' And I just think: My God, how did I get to be a pregnant policeman?"

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

He hated his hospital room. He prowled the halls, sat for hours in the cafeteria drinking coffee. He took illicit satisfaction in using the stairs, knowing patients were supposed to take the elevator. "I like to think no one knows I'm a patient," he said. "I want them to think I'm an employee." He raised his fingers to the shaven, clotted, swollen side of his head. "Of course, the disguise has a few flaws…"

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

They sent him out into the city. To a grocery store, to a coffee shop. But his doctor was more ambitious for him. "You're a professor, we've got to get you back into that environment. Take the T over to Harvard." This directive puzzled him. What was he supposed to do at Harvard once he got there? "I guess," he said, "she wants me to go into the library and just sort of . . . look things up?" The next time I visited, the doctor took me aside and said, "Listen, this might sound kind of pushy, but can he come live with you?"

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

At our house, he helped with the dishes. He played with our kids, missing his own. (Jenny flew up for weekends, but it was too complicated, and too expensive, to bring their two small children each time.) Every morning, he walked through the foul February weather to the T, like a commuter, only he went to the hospital. Or he went to Harvard, to attend lectures or work in the library. He kept a datebook, crammed with appointments for occupational therapy and brain scans, and lunches with friends, and the names of his doctors. He juggled dates and times and commitments, keeping careful track of where he needed to be when. Slowly, his mind was clearing. What helped to reorient him was a daily dose of chaos.

As Anatole Broyard wrote, "The sick man needs the contagion of life." You can't always design for healing. Sometimes what heals is the very absence of design. What heals is the subtle, complex set of jostling patterns and places and rituals we all cope with, expertly and unthinkingly, every day of our lives.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Two months after the accident, Keith went home to his family. Within a year, he had made virtually a full recovery. Gradually he went back to teaching and writing. He had a lousy sense of direction when driving, but then, he always had.

Who can say why he was lucky enough to recover? Maybe it was because when he lay on that ledge for two hours before the EMTs reached him, his head rested on a patch of snow, which slowed the swelling. Maybe it was the family and friends who kept talking to him when he was too lost to respond. Maybe it was the smart doctor at the great hospital, who kept shoving him out into the world.

But I believe that a big part of his healing was the world itself, the city, with all its stimulating disorder. It wasn't a careful, rational piece of healthcare design. It was a noisy, haphazard, filthy, brilliant mess. It challenged him. It pushed him to be competent, to manage complexity. It said — rudely, irresistibly — "Hey! Wake up. Pay attention. You are here." ■■■

Joan Wickersham lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is the author of *The Paper Anniversary* (Viking) and is finishing a new novel.

John Spengler, PhD, is the director of the Environmental Science and Engineering Program at the Harvard School of Public Health, where he is the Akira Yamaguchi Professor of Environmental Health and Human Habitation. Known to many design professionals for his work on indoor air quality, his research focuses on the public health implications of contaminants in the urban environment, dwellings, schools, hospitals, offices, and transportation systems.

Kira L. Gould, Assoc. AIA, is a freelance writer in Boston with an interest in sustainable design.

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New offices for the Environmental Science and Engineering Program incorporate cutting-edge systems and materials promoting environmental health.

Gould: You've spent more than 25 years researching and thinking about the relationship between architecture and public health and you've said that you've recently made a shift from studying problems to studying and articulating solutions. What have you discovered about the relationship between design and health?

Spengler: In some ways, I think we're rediscovering what people have been doing for millennia. Back in the 1800s, we saw the development of architecture that was designed to promote health — spas, health retreats, and TB sanitariums, where fresh air was part of the cure. It seems as though each generation rediscovers how intertwined housing conditions are with health. People have recently focused on molds and allergens in houses. In fact these are related to both design and lack of maintenance, which can lead to ill health. And there's a lot more to be discovered in defining the problems. But we know enough in some areas of science and engineering to offer solutions. So why isn't it being done? Why isn't that knowledge migrating from the curators of that information to the people who are designing and the people who are housekeeping? We're just beginning to see health emerge as a design objective. Manufacturers of vacuum cleaners, for example, now talk about efficient, healthy vacuum cleaners with HEPA filters that can get rid of allergens. Manufacturers of bedding talk about allergy-free fibers. Manufacturers of ventilation systems are really thinking about what it means to have good filtration and heat recovery and saying that this will promote health. But when you come to the issue of why this isn't integrated into how we design and operate and manage our public housing, then you're into complicated social, political, labor, and management issues. So even though we can say we know the right thing to do, how do we implement it? It's a challenge

photos courtesy of Akira Yamaguchi/KST Hokkaido

that I found intriguing, and so I decided that this is where I'm going to put my effort.

Gould: You and your team are trying to address the solutions to these problems on multiple levels — from the residents to management and through various levels of our culture and society.

Spengler: That's right. If you dissect the problem, you discover all kinds of barriers to incorporating the health intent into design criteria. Maybe there's a materials and equipment component to it — what are you and I going to do if we don't have vacuum cleaners? The barriers can range from inspections that aren't thorough to bad contracts for pest control to management processes that don't accommodate new design and renovation. I'll give you an example that shows the complexity of the problem. We're well aware of cases of children whose families walk into the ER as their primary care, who are hospitalized because of severe allergy or asthma attacks. They might spend two or three days in the hospital at a rate of $1,500 a night with repeat visits. Those are public dollars that are being spent, and yet we can't transfer that over into preventative, therapeutic attention to the triggers that put them in the hospital in the first place.

Gould: That makes a case for public investment in that type of work.

Spengler: The greatest thing that could happen would be that we could prove the economic case and the medical case for prescribing interventions for housing. Then a physician could say that these are cost-recoverable items and there is a system in place to make sure that housing units are brought up to a healthful standard.

Gould: Do you think that is a potential outcome of your current work?

Spengler: That's what is driving our study. If this works, it could have a national impact.

Gould: I'd like to talk about Akira Yamaguchi, who endowed the chair that you hold at the Harvard School of Public Health. He is a Buddhist carpenter with what you call a broad "bio-regional" vision, who applied traditional Japanese building techniques to housing. Maybe you can talk about how his work has shaped your studies of human health. You have said that he emphasizes that buildings are here to nurture society, families, and nature. I think that is a really nice encapsulation of how architecture fits into society.

Spengler: He's a fascinating individual. He grew up in a small village in a remote area of Japan. I guess it would be the equivalent of some remote areas of upstate Maine — that's how different it is and how far it is from the central power base of Tokyo. He has incorporated these beliefs into tangible concepts, from how he runs his company to how he thinks about the housing system in order to nurture families and effectively nurture Japanese society, which he claims has been disrupted by the transition to the nuclear family and the separation of elders from grandchildren. Japan suffers from many of the ills that we've now come to recognize in our own Western society. He really hit on some fundamental truths through observation, through philosophical thinking and experimentation. He pays attention to materials and pays attention to local systems, the local economy, and the local ecosystem. He's trying to accomplish a tremendous amount through the design and building of homes.

Gould: Are there specific aspects of his holistic view that you have tried to bring to certain efforts that you're working on here?

Spengler: My decision to move toward solutions, rather than to focus on the problems, is greatly influenced by the hopefulness that he presents. And I think the lack of personal fear of stepping into another discipline reflects his holistic thinking. So often, we limit ourselves by saying, "Well, I was trained in this and I'm not an expert in that," but that's not the case. You can always reflect on other disciplines in a more philosophical, tangible, intuitive way that lets you draw knowledge out of them. He led me to think in terms of a more systems-based approach, and that's reflected in our research in public housing.

Gould: You're talking about a multidisciplinary approach. One of the things I think is the strongest component of sustainable design is its focus on that approach, having everyone at the table at the outset and really having an interchange among different fields.

Spengler: Let me tell you something I learned recently. I was at a meeting in Cincinnati of a group called Affordable Comfort, which has been around for maybe 15 years. Most of the people who come to these meetings are the "weatherization" people, who seal and insulate homes, the energy conservation people, and people working in the public sector on utility assistance. This year, we had a series of workshops related to healthy housing. We had HUD people, we had energy people, we had housing authority people. But we also were joined by 12 women who were residents in Cincinnati's public housing. We talked with them about tenant rights, tenant responsibilities, high performance, and health standards for new structures. What I learned by listening to these women talk about their lives, their attempts to work within their housing-authority structure, and how they have been marginalized in the process will stick with me for a long time. One woman spoke up and said, "Well, I recommend that the people who are going to design our new housing come down here and live for about a week, live in one of the units, and then you'll learn about our lives and you'll learn about our community." This is basic stuff. But does this ever happen? I think it's probably rare for a public housing administrator to live in a public housing unit even for a short time.

Facing page:
Details of houses by Akira Yamaguchi, who endowed the chair held by John Spengler at the Harvard School of Public Health. A Buddhist carpenter with a broad "bio-regional" vision, Yamaguchi applies traditional Japanese building techniques to housing.

Gould: You recently had the experience of being a client, when some of the departments of the School of Public Health moved from the main campus on Huntington Avenue in Boston to the renovated Landmark Center building on the Fenway.

Spengler: Even though we're the occupants, it wasn't initially clear to the school or the architect that we were the clients. They approached the project with the standard business model: The client is the one who pays the bill, in this case, the facility dean. And the typical process is: design it quickly, get it out to bid, build fast, and keep within budget. We entered the picture and wanted to espouse our views. We are, after all, a department of environmental health — studying indoor air, ergonomics, health, and safety in the construction industry — and to not take the knowledge that we ourselves were generating and put it into the design of our space would have been an opportunity lost. So that's why we became more assertive and promoted various goals: Indoor air quality was clearly one of them. Trying out, testing, and promoting new materials and ways of construction was another. We were willing to take a chance with some of these design ideas in the US, although we knew that these things were working elsewhere, so it wasn't as though we were far out on the frontier.

Gould: The bamboo flooring is an example of that.

Spengler: Yes. And when our offices were first built, we were the largest under-floor ventilation installation in the country. Perhaps what is most significant about this space for us is that we have the ability to learn something. We issue questionnaires to our own people. We do organic pollutant measurements. We're going to start to measure light levels to find out what people really need. We're pursuing certification under the US Green Building Council LEED [Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design] program and Energy Star ratings, so we will track its performance. And we'll be writing a case study.

Gould: One innovation is the "digital addressable lighting interface." Perhaps you can explain that.

Spengler: This is a system that allows the facility manager and, eventually, individual staff to control the light levels. The light level can be adjusted up on cloudy days and down on sunny days. Eventually, we will have icons on our individual computers that will allow us to make adjustments. You might say, I need contrast to perform a task, not necessarily a lot of lumens. Different people will have different needs. We hypothesize that this will save a tremendous amount of money.

There's a downside to this; this is again part of the learning experience. We've been so good at reducing our heat load with flat-screen computers, low-energy lightbulbs, and occupancy sensors that we have had to add heat into the building. Most buildings have enough excess heat from people, computers, and lights to offset the heating needs. Fortunately, we had commissioning consultants involved early in the design process, and they told our engineering firm to put in a reheat coil in our air-handling system. Not many people have had experience with these new systems.

Gould: You've been involved with the Harvard Green Campus Initiative. What are some of its goals?

Spengler: We're really fortunate to be at a point where the university is showing a commitment to move systematically toward more sustainable goals. It's a commitment to engage in deliberate, well-understood, cost-effective — sometimes maybe not cost-effective — environmentally beneficial courses of action. We're using our strengths as a learning organization — doing case studies with real projects such as the Landmark Center, for example — and we have a system for feeding information back to property managers so that they know what to expect of contractors and architects. It's amazing what's happened already, but no one's telling the big story. Because it's a lot of little stories — things like recycling, lawn care, powering vehicle fleets.

Gould: It seems like a really broad mission.

Spengler: Yes, but we haven't yet taken on a project with high symbolic value. And we have the opportunity to do that with the development of the Allston campus. I was told this is the biggest building burst in the history of the university, one and a half million square feet of new building slated for the next ten years. That's big.

Gould: At a time when government budgets are under duress and security concerns are taking a lot of attention away from issues such as sustainability, can public-health concerns be quantified enough to get the attention of the government?

Spengler: Maybe there are some benefits of going with the flow. Right now, we have national attention on security and protection of occupants of buildings. You can then look for co-benefits. I'll give you some examples: If we're serious about the nature of biological threat, then what are our lines of defense? One is to limit access, which means more thoughtful placement of air intakes. Another one would be disinfection of air, and still another benefit might be better detectors for contaminants in the air. And that could stimulate, as has already begun, new design for schools. Communicable respiratory diseases are spread by children, through their schools. If we really were to pursue public-health benefits to our society, we would figure out how to provide cleaner air in our schools. You would knock down infection rates, you'd knock down transmission to parents, and you'd keep the whole populace healthier. If there are going to be defense dollars that are spent on security issues, then we ought to look at the derivatives.

Gould: A few illustrations of that kind of systemic understanding can be really powerful. To what extent can you expect the private sector to push that kind of thinking?

Spengler: I'm both encouraged and fearful. Encouraged when I look at the growth of membership in the Green Building Council and the number of design firms that now claim they have LEED-certified staff. The fearful side is that we are bringing people up to code minimums. Training and certification are based on consensus-driven guidelines and that means they are not pushing the frontiers. The bar has to be raised. We don't need factors of two. We need factors of ten. Factors of two are effectively what LEED is getting us to: decrease energy by 50 percent. And that's important. But I think we shouldn't be complacent.

Gould: Leading sustainable-design architects talk about the idea that doing something "less bad" is not good enough. It's good to use LEED as a checklist, but it doesn't embrace the ultimate goal, which is a more holistic approach.

Spengler: I think what happened on the Harvard campus is a case in point. Some friends in the School of Design were, I would say, very disappointed with the university promoting the Green Building Council, to the point where they wouldn't participate in the Green Campus Initiative anymore. They aspired for Harvard to be more thoughtful rather than just follow LEED ratings for building design. Which was a loss because, even though I believe absolutely that we have to do better, the Council really has made a difference because people understand the concept; they can work with the checklists. That's a very important first step. Now there is broader acceptance of the concept of higher performance and sustainability for new buildings.

Gould: What is the role of technology in solving some of these issues?

Spengler: I ask my students whether they are optimistic or pessimistic about our place and time on this planet. It usually works out that those who are optimistic are on the side of technology — they believe that we have always risen to the challenge and we can design our way, invent our way, out of any problem. And those who are pessimistic say that we can never fully appreciate or understand the foibles of human societies, our cultural conflicts, and the complexity of ecosystems. I think the high dependence on technology in Western society, in our buildings, is a manifestation of that. Yamaguchi designs houses that are safe and comfortable but don't have mechanical systems. He refuses to put them in — they are counter to his philosophy. He has a house that would never pass our energy certification, but it outperforms other buildings. And the other perspective on this comes out of my work as a consultant to the Dutch government. I've watched them go through several phases of their national environmental plan, the policy act that they passed 12 or 13 years ago. First they established covenants among industrial sectors to establish performance goals and acceptance of environmental standards. All branches of the federal government worked with their private sector counterparts. Then they started to fold municipal governments into the planning process. And now they face the biggest problem: consumerism.

So the answers lie in values. In attitudes. In consumption. Technology can't solve that problem. That is the thing that we've got to realize in trying to find where the answers lie. ■■■

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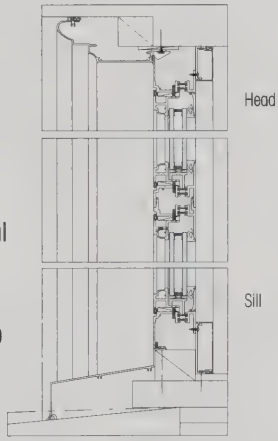

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Letter from Oslo

by Edward Robbins

Oslo is a city of contrasts and a city in throes of change. At its core, it is a dense, mostly 19th-century city of four- and five-story neo-classical buildings, broad avenues, and sweeping vistas: a model of the best of 19th-century city-making. If it is not as large as the great cities of Europe (Oslo has only 500,000 or so inhabitants and a million in its metropolitan region), it is clearly urban. Cafés, restaurants, theaters, nightclubs, and bars dot the streets of Oslo's inner core and continue to proliferate in the city. Much of this growth has happened over the last five years.

Even as Oslo experiences rapid change, it remains wedded to a natural landscape that has changed little over the centuries. On its outskirts, and even in parts of the core, virgin forests and wooded hills, uninhabited islands and lonely beaches dominate much of the landscape. The municipality is roughly 60 percent forest and farmland with over 2000 km of trails, which form a striking and dramatic contrast to the built-up core of the city. Yet the natural landscape and built core are in an easy marriage with each other. It is a constant wonder to me that when I jog along the Oslo fjord near my home in the city center, I find myself running along a wooded path bordering a working farm — the king's farm, as it turns out. The vista as I run with its grazing sheep and cows amid wooded fields is closer to a 16th-century European painted landscape than a contemporary city. Yet my home is part of a dense residential and commercial fabric as urban as one finds in Boston.

Although Oslo is architecturally mostly 19th-century, it has some of the best and worst examples of contemporary urban design and architecture. In its center lie a number of large, cold, unused, and empty public spaces. At the same time there are large residential/commercial developments that are wonderfully inventive and architecturally detailed. An example is Äker Brygge, next to the harbor and one of the most densely used public areas of Oslo. Happily, though, Oslo has been able to avoid too many of the worst examples of contemporary development.

Two big new projects, however, cast doubt about the city's future: the Opera House, under design by Snøhetta, an Oslo architectural firm; and the development of the "Vestbanen" area near the harbor, the subject of a competition with design proposals by Foster, Nouvel, and Koolhaas, among others. The Opera House is a potentially wonderful building, but the changes that will accompany it in the surrounding neighborhood — which are still being fought over among planners, architects, and developers — are worrying. Oslo may well end up with a homogenized, gentrified, and boring commercial/residential development. What the design for Vestbanen will do to a part of the city that on one side has the estimable Äker Brygge and the other two sides cold and unused streets fronting modern speculative office buildings is open to question. Will it soften the ugly edges of its two sides, or will it try to compete with the drama of Äker Brygge and the nearby City Hall with its stark brick forms punctuated by statues celebrating social democracy?

On the built outskirts of the city, you find everything from out-of-context Modernist buildings and wonderfully designed buildings like the new church in Mortensrud by Jensen & Skodvin. But what in the end saves Oslo from being scarred by bad design is its landscape. The woods and hills, which surround the center, are able to absorb the worst of suburban development, softening whatever architectural abominations are built.

Oslo is a prosperous and increasingly cosmopolitan city and for the most part looks it. While gentrification has increased, it has not yet become the dominant force that entirely changes the character of urban neighborhoods, as in Boston. It is questionable how long this will last. Along with gentrification, Oslo has experienced significant immigration. In the past ten years or so, Oslo has undergone a sea change through the growing numbers and influence of new immigrants from the Third World. Today, immigrants number over 100,000. Their presence has opened up what had been a very homogenous city to a diverse range of cultural influences, slowly transforming musical tastes, food, street life, and cultural and religious practices.

Although not openly hostile to immigrants, the city is quite segregated. In the wealthy western core of the city, you rarely see people of color. There is an invisible dividing line through the city center. As you walk from west to east, you come to a point where the color and class of people changes radically from wealthy and white, mostly Norwegian, to working class and diverse, with a large proportion of immigrants.

There are no obvious tensions on a daily level. But lurking behind all this is a strong anti-immigrant sentiment within a small but significant part of the population. Last year, neo-Nazis murdered a young boy of color. To the credit of the citizens of Oslo, over 45,000 people marched in protest and in support of immigrants. Yet, what the future holds in this regard is unknown. Immigrants and working-class residents are leaving the central city and moving to the outlying suburban developments. There is real potential that Oslo will become a divided city — with a gentrified, homogeneous, white, middle-class core surrounded by working-class and immigrant enclaves in the suburbs.

What stands out most about Oslo is the light: it is a bi-seasonal city. The contrast between winter and summer is not so much the weather — the climate is temperate — but the yearly cycle of light and dark. In summer, there are 21 hours of daylight and a short 3-hour period of dusk. In winter, there are about 6 hours of daylight when the city is not overcast. The contrast is not just between light and dark. It is a difference between a season of lively urbanity and public sociability and a season of an almost mournful, mostly inward-looking, privatized sensibility.

In summer, Oslo is a joy. People are out at all times of the day and night. Outdoor cafés and restaurants are full of people, the streets crowded with activity, the woods full of hikers, and the parks and beaches are a blanket of bodies seeking the sun. In winter, streets are mostly empty, with a few exceptions, and life moves inward into people's homes. What sociability there is, revolves around private and indoor activities. In January and February, if there is snow, the city brightens a little and people come outdoors to participate in winter sports like skiing and skating.

Oslo is a city waiting to be discovered, most of all, by its own residents. People in Oslo see the city as a small and not particularly interesting or commendable place. As a friend from Buenos Aires living in Oslo observed, there is a poignant division between what Norwegians who live in Oslo think they have and what they do have. "In Oslo," he said, "the air is clear, its setting beautiful, its design full of wonderful urban vistas, beautiful architecture, a wonderfully human scale, and easy urban sociability. It is a profoundly livable city. Oslo is a mini-paradise. The wonder is that its inhabitants don't know it." ■■■

Edward Robbins is a professor at the Architecture School of Oslo. An anthropologist, he taught urban social theory at the Harvard Graduate School of Design for more than a decade. He is the author of *Why Architects Draw* (MIT Press).

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Covering the Issues
Periodical roundup

by Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA

New definitions of green... In "The New Economy of Nature" (*Orion*, Spring 2002), Gretchen C. Daily and Katherine Ellison argue that ecological systems function as pieces of infrastructure, and should be valued, paid for, and regulated as such. They highlight New York City's 1997 decision to invest in the Catskill/Delaware Watershed instead of constructing a new water treatment plant. For centuries, the watershed has cleaned New York City's tap water naturally; it's never passed through mechanical filters. Yet to make this type of natural infrastructure work affects how and where we build roads, houses, offices, cities. Patiently, clearly (and thankfully without environmentalists' typical doomsday-is-upon-us fervor), the authors outline the larger economic and ecological issues: "We lack a formal system of appraising or monitoring the value of natural assets, and have few means of insuring them against damage or loss." In understanding ecological systems as economic engines, Daily and Ellison offer serious food for thought.

Alternative careers... An architect inspired the space program? Remember, you heard it here first. OK, second. Ron Miller celebrates the career of Chesley Bonestell in "To Boldly Paint What No Man Has Painted Before" (*Invention & Technology*, Summer 2002). Bonestell, a Columbia architecture graduate, designed the façade of the Chrysler Building and worked with Joseph Strauss on the Golden Gate Bridge before he painted Hollywood scenes for *Citizen Kane* and the 1939 *Hunchback of Notre Dame* (of course! the flying buttresses!). Ultimately, Bonestell combined his knowledge of perspective, light, and shadow and his skill in architectural rendering with his childhood love of outer space. In 1944, he took his first set of sketch-book paintings of an imaginary journey on Saturn to *Life* magazine. With photographic quality, Bonestell's widely published visions made the planets seem like real places. Scientifically accurate and technically precise, his paintings popularized the fledgling space program, demonstrating that space flight was not so far-fetched. The rest is history.

The little house that could... Or many little houses: *The Economist* claims that "houses saved the world" (March 30-April 5, 2002). The cover story observes that the American economy survived the dot-com crash and September 11 far better than expected due to the strength of the housing market. In a new feature, to be updated at least annually, *The Economist* provides a set of global house-price indices, compiling house price data, interest rates, and income-to-mortgage ratios for a dozen countries and cities worldwide. Home sweet home.

A wolf in sheep's clothing?... "Your AAA dues fuel pollution and sprawl," cries Ken Silverstein in *Harper's* "Annotation" feature (May 2002). On the plus side, AAA changes flat tires, gives tows, hands out countless Triptiks, and provides bail bonds (for that run-in with the local sheriff). It was a major force in creating our national road system. On the minus side, it employs the Darth Vader-style tactics and the DC lobby necessary to do so. Silverstein decries the club's non-elected governing board and its unpublicized record of supporting opponents of environmental, smart growth, fuel economy, and auto-safety legislation, all "on behalf of [its] millions of members." Are you a member?

Start spreading the news... What comes next at New York's Ground Zero? As cleanup shifts to construction, a trio of articles address the complex issues about building on this "most contested ground in America." *Time*'s special report (May 27, 2002) gives an overview, highlighting the major players, agencies, and design discussions currently under consideration. *The American Enterprise* (June 2002) interviews a series of Big Apple luminaries, including architecture advocate and former senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Moynihan insists that the first step must be rebuilding the city's transportation infrastructure at Pennsylvania Station. Meanwhile *Forbes* (May 27, 2002) highlights the money trail, wondering aloud how Mayor Bloomberg should divide the $21 billion bailout, too little and thus inherently unfair, and what that might mean for buildings and open space on the ground. How does one build civic consensus yet also create stellar design for the most significant construction project in the city's recent history? Sound familiar?

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, teaches the architecture studios at Smith College and maintains a practice in Boston.

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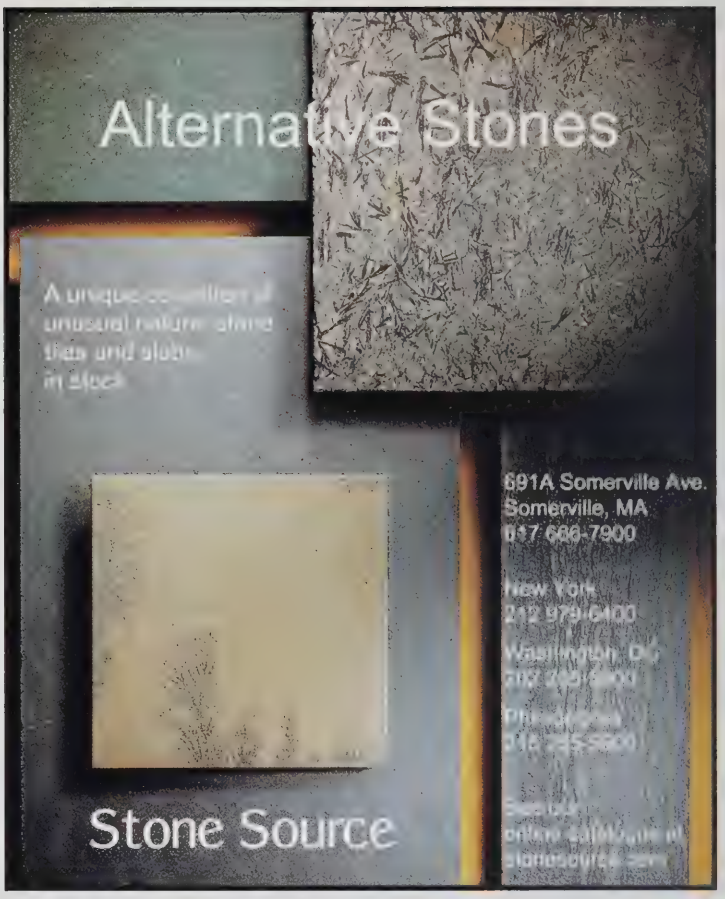

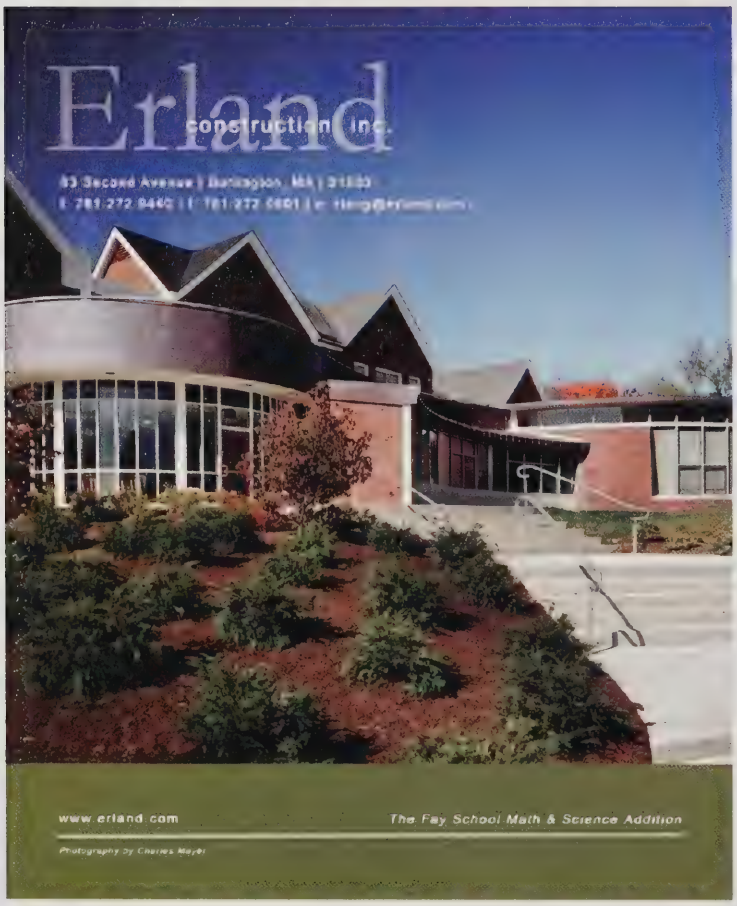

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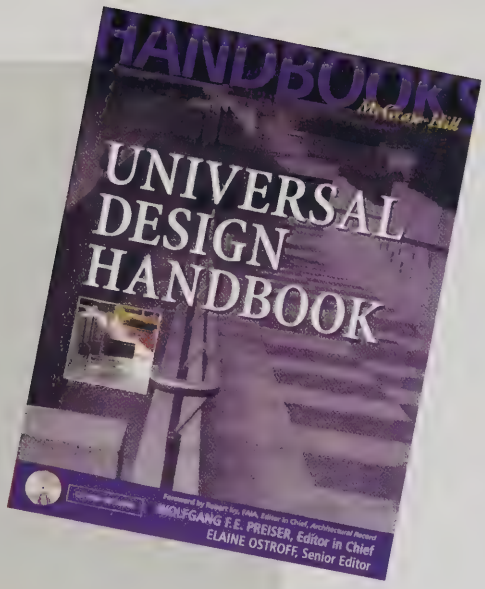


Wolfgang F.E. Preiser, Editor in Chief
Elaine Ostroff, Senior Editor
McGraw-Hill, 2001

Reviewed by A. Vernon Woodworth AIA

Perhaps most people have had a similar experience: Late for a meeting, I hurriedly parked my car in the underground garage of an urban shopping mall. After the meeting, I was unable to find my car. The garage had numerous entrances and exits and multiple levels, but every elevator bank and stair entrance looked identical. After an hour of searching, I was beginning to lose it. I felt inadequate, I was convinced that I was not up to the stress of my job, I began to feel powerless and bleak. The security guard who was by now accompanying me regarded me with suspicion when I suddenly panicked that I had also lost my keys somewhere during the search.

We found the car by leaving the building and carefully tracing backwards the route I had followed to go to my meeting. More than a little embarrassed, I asked the guard if this happened often. He replied that an average of five to seven people a day seek help from Security in locating their cars.

The minor inconvenience of this experience rattled me. A therapist would have explored these feelings, perhaps encouraging me to trace them back to my childhood or relating them to my fear of the challenges of mid-life. However, because I was immersed in the *Universal Design Handbook*, I was able to recognize that I had been dis-empowered by the disorienting design of the garage. If the garage had provided a legible and coherent sense of place, I would not have lost an hour of my day or been subjected to the humiliation, however minor, that this event engendered.

What is "Universal Design"? One author describes it as follows: "a design approach that places the user on center-stage and seeks to create an open, accessible, and integrated world for the future through design that is age-friendly, barrier-free, and inclusive." This is achieved, according to another author, through a "high level of input from end-users." Universal Design's slogan could be, in the words of still another contributor, "Good design enables, and bad design disables, irrespective of the user's abilities."

Universal Design was conceived by Ronald L. Mace FAIA, who sought to expand the lessons of accessible design. Because the full developmental spectrum of the human life-span incorporates varying levels of ability — both inherent (physical and cognitive) and acquired (through learning) — any environmental feature can be enabling or disabling based on the match-up between ability and environment. Universal design, therefore, does not define disability based on physical or cognitive functioning, but rather as a "mismatch between ability and environment." People are "disabled by design rather than their particular abilities."

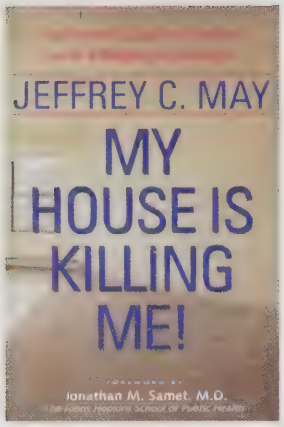
Because Universal Design is a young idea, the overwhelming impression imparted by this collection is one of promise and potential. The bulk of the articles in this volume point to the many directions designers can pursue to enable rather than disable. The concept is so broad that the scale of endeavor is irrelevant: from industrial design to urban planning, enabling users across the developmental spectrum is the objective. Seventy articles explore the various applications of this approach. Some contributions, like the several articles written or co-authored by mobility research pioneer Edward Steinfeld, build on the methodologies of the accessibility movement, while many others explore new paradigms and approaches. As a result, although each article is similar in format, the practical uses of these contributions will vary widely. Some articles will provide valuable research and practical data, while others only hint at what may become an important new direction for research and application. For example, Singanapalli Balaram's article on "Universal Design and the Majority World" explores how the role of mythology in Indian culture informs attitudes towards the elderly and the infirm. John Zeisel's article on brain development employs Maslow's model of need hierarchies and self-actualization to explore the design of healing environments for Alzheimer's patients. Several articles explore the issue of sustainability as an aspect of Universal Design.

Missing from this volume is a good critique of the limitations of design in resolving social and economic inequalities. There is also no discussion of the inherent conflict between the social goals of maximum accessibility and historic preservation. Nevertheless, Universal Design is an idea that deserves to be incorporated into the mainstream of designer education and practice. Unlike accessibility codes, which are generally viewed by the design community as legal requirements complicating the design process, Universal Design can enrich the design process. It is quite likely that the publication of this volume will go a long way towards making this possible. And while Universal Design may not be able to eliminate stress from our lives, reverse the effects of aging, or create equal opportunity for all, at the very least it can guide us towards making the world more user-friendly, and help us find our cars. ■■■

A. Vernon Woodworth AIA is chair of the BSA Codes Committee and a member of the Sullivan Code Group in Boston.

Universal Design Handbook is available from the BSA: 671 951 1433 x221.

Books



My House is Killing Me! The Home Guide for Families with Allergies and Asthma

by Jeffrey C. May

The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001

Reviewed by Wagdy Anis AIA

Molds, mildews, mites. What were once invisible are now stories on the nightly news as Americans battle allergies, asthma, and chemical sensitivities. Bad indoor air quality is affecting both our health and our pocketbooks, in terms of productivity, healthcare, and lost wages. Indoor air quality (IAQ) is also becoming a leading basis of injury lawsuits against the design professions. That is why this book is so timely for those who design buildings as well as those who occupy them.

Jeff May is an indoor air quality troubleshooter based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Early on, he grabs the reader's attention with some compelling statistics:

- Women and children suffer from the consequences of bad IAQ at twice the rate that men do.
- One in four people has allergies.
- One in 14 people has asthma.
- More than one in 20 people have multiple chemical sensitivity.

Perhaps most startling, anyone can become afflicted at any time.

In the introduction, May describes a voice-mail message left by a woman who was suffering from breathing difficulties in every room in her house but one. She ended her message, wailing, "My house is killing me!"— hence the title.

The book is divided into four parts. Part I describes "the cast of characters"— pollutants such as dust, dust mites, mold, mycotoxins, mildew, bacteria, and yeast; and pests such as carpet beetles, moths, cockroaches, and ants. May then describes the "stage and set" that are their sources: carpet, plants, pets. Each condition is supported by an example encountered in his investigations; it is a clever and entertaining technique to explain the issues.

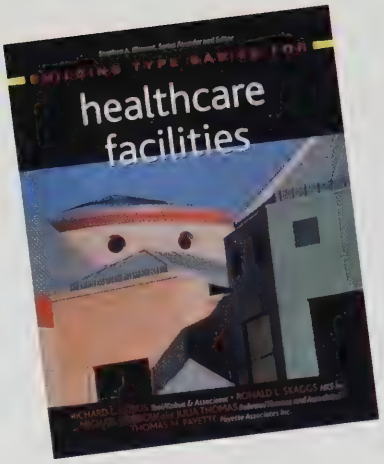
Part II covers "Daily Life" and explores the hazards attributable to each room of a house, again with May's case-study method. Potential evils can lurk in bedrooms, living rooms, kitchens, laundries; don't even ask about bathrooms. But May provides an education, with specific tips on how to avoid health and IAQ problems.

Part III covers the more obviously hostile spaces such as basements, crawl spaces, and attics. Here May focuses particularly on water migration and condensation, as well as problems that might be associated with various heating and cooling systems.

Part IV explains the pollution associated with new construction and renovation, including dust, lead, asbestos, paint, insulation as well as problems that can attributed to cleaning systems and products. Here, May also reviews problems that might be found "away from home," particularly in schools and offices.

May concludes each chapter with a checklist of recommendations and has included an excellent glossary of those pesky chemicals as well as a resource guide. The book is illustrated with photos of scenes such as mold-covered living rooms and microscopic views of mites, which will horrify adults and delight their children. May has made a timely, helpful — and even entertaining — contribution to a field that demands attention.

Wagdy Anis AIA is co-chair of the BSA Indoor Air Quality Committee and a principal and director of technical resources at Shepley Bulfinch Richardson and Abbott (www.sbra.com).



Building Type Basics For Health Care Facilities

by Michael Bobrow, Richard Kobus, Thomas Payette, Ronald Skaggs, Julia Thomas

John Wiley, 2000

Reviewed by Bob Humenn AIA

In the preface of *Building Type Basics for Healthcare Facilities*, Stephen Kliment FAIA writes, "It is not a coffee table book, lavish in color photography but meager in usable content. Rather it contains the kind of instant information architects, consultants, and their clients need in their various kinds of work, where, inevitably time is scarce." Kliment, who edits the "Building Type Basics" series, accurately describes the focus of this book, which is a collection of essays prepared by noted healthcare architects and organized by program type.

Richard Kobus AIA starts things off with an excellent overview of the healthcare industry, which provides the context for building decisions and the challenges facing all of us. Ronald Skaggs FAIA follows with a chapter on "ancillary departments," which most resembles familiar resources such as *Time-Saver Standards* or the *AIA Guidelines for the Design and Construction of Hospital and Healthcare Facilities*. Organized by diagnostic, interventional, therapy, logistical, and support departments, Skaggs has the challenge of describing 20 departments in 120 pages. Like a whirlwind vacation, his text offers the excitement of seeing so much, but leaves the reader wishing there were a chance to linger in one spot.

Inpatient care has taken many fascinating turns during the 20th century, and Michael Bobrow and Julia Thomas do an excellent job of describing the evolution of nursing-unit design in a subsequent chapter on inpatient care. As a result of the trend toward ambulatory care, many hospitals significantly reduced their number of beds. Now hospitals are faced with a deficit of beds and cannot meet the needs of an aging population. This chapter is an excellent resource for hospitals that are considering bed replacement projects.

An essay by Thomas Payette FAIA on ambulatory care facilities is a series of case studies of a variety of facility types, including HMOs, emergency departments, women's health, and mental health facilities. Today, the health centers that combine primary and specialty care with diagnostic and interventional departments are commonplace, and the ground-breaking work of the Mayo Clinic and Kaiser is easily taken for granted. The development of the ambulatory care facility was responsive to both the patient and the care provider needs, including wider access, and lower cost of care.

Although the chapters have their strengths, overall, a book such as this is a sum of its parts. Perhaps because of its structure, it never provides a holistic analysis of healthcare-facility design; for the most part it ignores strategic planning or environmental design issues that are faced by healthcare providers. The chapter on inpatient care is the only passionate plea for the creation of a healing environment in healthcare facilities. As Bobrow and Thomas write: "We urge the readers to internalize these humanistic concerns, and to create facilities that are not only highly efficient inpatient units but also restful, inviting refuges for the healing process."

Bob Humenn AIA is a principal with Steffian Bradley Architects in Boston and is the chair of the BSA Healthcare Facilities Committee.

CEPHEUS : Living Comfort Without Heating

by Helmut Krapmieier and Eckart Drössler

Springer, 2001

Reviewed by
Mark E. Kelley III, PE

Comfort without heating? European innovation? Passive multifamily housing? Low-cost energy efficiency? One can hope. This well-designed book reports the results of the Austrian research effort of the CEPHEUS (Cost Effective Passive Houses as European Standards) program of the European Commission. There is a bit of misleading information in this otherwise useful technological review of systems and performance. First, "without heating" really means "without conventional heating," since all the documented projects have heating systems, some of which are both complex and expensive. "Passive" here generally means "superinsulated," though all the projects have some solar input and some have more glass to the south. Nevertheless, these are real results for innovative buildings and as such can be very instructive.

Supplemented with color photographs and detail drawings, the publication documents 14 different buildings built under the program, both single-family and multifamily. The Austrian climate range is similar to the range from Boston to Bangor, so technical solutions would be transferable, theoretically. Most of the documented buildings have thick walls, high-performance glass, good ventilation, and lots of attention to airsealing — where most energy is lost in well-insulated buildings. Many of the buildings combine active solar systems with ground-source heat pumps or pellet boilers, sometimes in complicated ways. In most cases, these prototypical buildings didn't cost less than conventional construction, with costs ranging from EU$95 to EU$183 ($85-$167) per square foot (obviously, correlated with system complexity). The European building designs are quite different from what we are used to — few pitched roofs or clapboards, plenty of glass, stucco, and steel. As an engineer, I am not qualified to comment on the aesthetics — a reprieve for the designers.

I was particularly interested in multifamily ventilation systems, since the Europeans are more advanced in this area than Americans. I wasn't disappointed; all of the units had fresh-air supply systems, most with heat recovery, some with earth tube preheat. The "no heat" systems with 100 percent fresh-air supply and heating coils to provide all the necessary comfort heat promise a simpler combined heat and fresh-air system. The reality is that increasing fresh-air supply above health requirements only adds thermal liability, and if you try to deliver all of the heat in this air stream, the higher airflow rate raises the load considerably, even with heat recovery systems. There is no real advantage to this much fresh air — recirculating some of the interior air in standard fashion while bringing in 15-20 cubic feet per minute per person will save energy and provide high-quality ventilation. Even though none of the developers in these projects was brave enough to leave out the radiators, this approach could work very well with less than 100 percent fresh air.

This book provides a valuable lesson for architects and engineers: the simple things work best. The best systems proved to be those we are familiar with: good insulation, airsealing, high-performance windows, simple heating systems, simple ventilating systems. With better envelopes, simpler systems can lower costs — a simplified duct system for air delivery of heat, cooling, *and* fresh air is a real possibility. The key is working from the outside-in to minimize the need, then minimize the systems.

Mark Kelley is president of Building Science Engineering in Harvard, Massachusetts, and is principal investigator for the Hickory Consortium — part of the Department of Energy Building America Program.

Fat of The Land: Garbage in New York: the Last Two Hundred Years

by Benjamin Miller

Four Walls Eight Windows, 2000

Reviewed by
Hubert Murray AIA

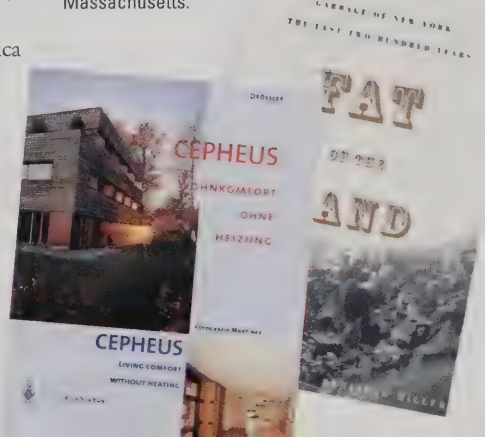
Benjamin Miller, a former director of policy planning for the New York Department of Sanitation, has been immersed in his subject for most of his professional life. Through his tales of ambition and intrigue surrounding the disposal of the detritus of industrial and domestic production, Miller drags us down with him into the whole sloppy mess. The characters that populate his story are noble and nefarious, bureaucratic and buccaneering, each a player in the New York stakes, all consumed in the technology, politics, and profits generated by the city's garbage. No less than in other fields of capitalist enterprise, the waste industry of this great city has attracted, made, and broken, business moguls (W.R. Grace and William Randolph Hearst); reformers (Edwin Chadwick, Rachel Carson, Barry Commoner, and Ralph Nader); public servants (Frederick Law Olmsted, Fiorella La Guardia, and Robert Moses); and political hucksters (Al D'Amato, Rudy Giuliani, and Ed Koch), to name only a few.

Thrilling as it is to wallow in the slurry of New York politics, picking up here and there the solid matter of the issues of the moment, rarely do we get our bearings from the coordinates of broader national or regional policy. We are taken through the narratives of landfills (Riker's Island, Corona Meadows, Jamaica Bay, Barren Island, and Fresh Kills) and incinerators (including the Brooklyn Ash network and the Brooklyn Navy Yard site), but it is only on page 268 that we get a wider picture of the technical and economic framework for waste-management policy in a large metropolitan area. Miller compares policy formulation to a "three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle… one dimension represent[ing] the disparate waste materials generated…, the second the various … technologies for collecting, transporting, processing and disposing of those materials, and the third the economic and environmental effects of the alternative and interconnected… systems." Even so, one feels that the ex-director, immersed in detail, is unable to lift his gaze sufficiently to give us an overview of the garbage landscape in either national or global terms.

The United States and the European Union are both faced with increasing opposition to landfill and incineration, almost to the point of shutdown. While the Environmental Protection Agency has long shown the way in the development of standards, the EU has now adopted legislation based on the concept of Zero Waste, which integrates producer responsibility, ecodesign, waste reduction, re-use and recycling, all within a single regulatory framework. Waste management is no longer defined as searching for a place to dump or burn, rather as an integral phase of production and consumption.

Miller's narrative makes a good read. As a story, it would be greatly improved with a better map of the boroughs. As policy, the "map" needs to place New York within the community of industrial nations.

Hubert Murray AIA has an architectural and planning practice in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



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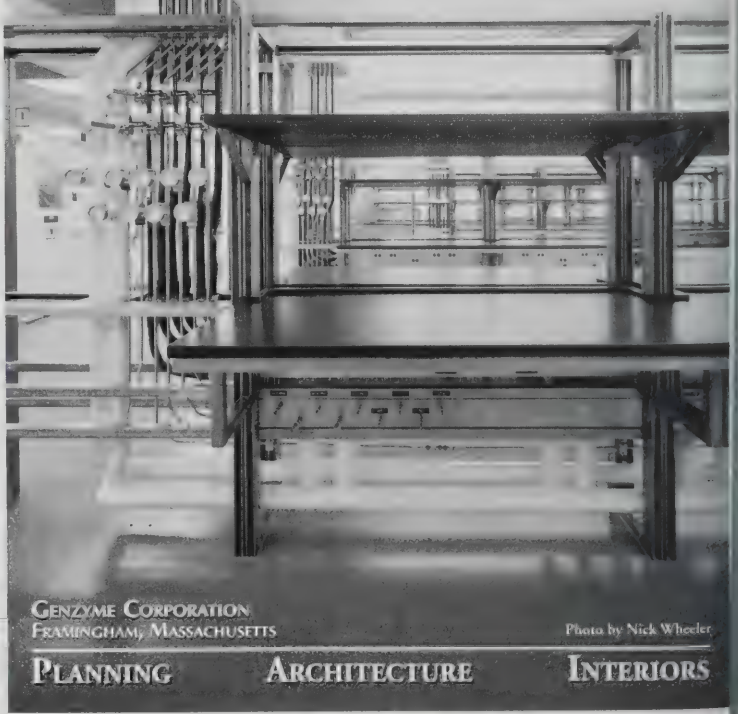

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Richard White Sons, Inc. www.rwsons.com	50
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Site Work

Web sites of note

Healthy People 2010

www.health.gov/healthypeople

Healthy People 2010 is the "prevention agenda for the Nation." You probably didn't know we had one. Featuring graphics that are remarkably cheerful for a government site, this site's most useful offering might be the "Healthfinder" — a screened guide to reliable health info on the Web.

Indoor Air Quality

www.dehs.umn.edu/iaq

Comprehensive information, courtesy of the University of Minnesota. Includes chemical sensitivities, guidelines for responses to flooding and water damage, and a nifty collection of photos of all sorts of disgusting fungi, from Absidia to Wallemia.

Healthy Flying

www.flyana.com

"A rare, no-holds-barred look at the multiple dangers of air travel." No kidding. Worried about developing deep-vein thrombosis and a nasty case of TB? This site is for you. Start with this little factoid: Airline pilots get ten times more oxygen than economy passengers get.

Building Science Corporation

www.buildingscience.com

Sure, this terrific site promotes BSC's services. But it also offers all sorts of free info, articles, and links about air quality and moisture in buildings. It's sometimes provocative and often entertaining. Check out the "Top Ten Dumb Things" to do in the South and in the North. "Houses That Work" offers technical information about building in your climate. Venting isn't always good for you.

What Poison Ivy Looks Like

www.poison-ivy.org

Scratch and ooze no more! Jon Sachs of Brookline, Massachusetts, has assembled the definitive collection of poison ivy pix showing the evil plant in all its nefarious forms. Buy the poster — maybe you can write off the expense. As Sachs notes, "I would think that architects are subject to attack from poison ivy during site visits."

Creating A Healthy Environment

www.sprawlwatch.org/health.pdf

The fight against sprawl has a new ally: The Centers for Disease Control. Read this report from the CDC to learn why sprawl is bad for you.

US Geological Survey, Earthquake Hazards Program

http://quake.usgs.gov

Was that an earthquake or does your life really rock? Get the latest quake info from the folks who know.

We're always looking for intriguing Web sites, however foggy the connection to architecture. Send your candidates to: epadjen@architects.org

Other Voices by Marcie Hershman

The House on Stanton Road

photos: Timothy Whitney

Over the years, my partner and I considered moving to a new house, but each time we returned home from the search, we felt as if we *were* home. True, we had tired of living in the six modestly proportioned rooms on the second floor, with tenants occupying five nearly identical rooms below, but it seemed as if the 1920s, wood-shingled, two-family colonial was where we were supposed to be.

Then I got sick. In rapid order, my vision, hearing, breathing, appetite, and stamina deteriorated. Blood samples, MRIs, neurology, pulmonary, ophthalmology, audiology exams — these procedures took over my days. People I'd just met became my semi-intimate companions. The teams of specialists engaged in seeking a diagnosis were devoted to their tasks, but they were just as surely individuals, and no less complicated for that. Often I was left on the sideline as they worked with each other, and to my exhausted chagrin, sometimes against each other. Diagnosis seemed far-off.

Then one afternoon, lying in bed, shades pulled to block the sun, I was startled to hear myself whisper: "I can't believe I'm going to die in a two-family house."

■ ■ ■

The moment afterward, I had to laugh. Inserting a house into the life-death equation was absurd. Still, the disappointment I felt about where I'd ended up was real. There was no longer any use in denying it. Somehow I should have moved on, and hadn't. If health was restored to me, I'd celebrate its energy. I promised myself: I'd move on.

Ten months passed. By then, auto-immune illness in retreat, we began to make a list of what we wanted most in a house. The items read like a prescription for joy: light, a sense of flow, simplicity and elegance of line, a playful openness at its core — a unifying lightness in the center. Moreover, we wanted all this here, right where we lived. Could this place built as two separate living units become a single, graceful structure? We hoped to be able to find within our old house, which had sheltered us well for so long, a future home.

In architect Timothy Whitney, whose private practice focuses on residential architecture, we found someone able to listen, as well as guide us toward new ideas. Throughout the series of meetings, he gave definition and shape to wishes that once seemed vaguely possible. Yes, we would preserve the second-floor dining room's warmly burnished ceiling beams, because for seventy-five years they were the house's only proud-and-fancy architectural detail, only now, we'd tunnel upward between each and install large fixed skylights. Light would filter down via the tunnels and fill the heart of the house, even two stories below, because we'd keep only a third of the first floor's similarly beamed ceiling. We envisioned walls moved, taken out, or gentled into curves; and windows replaced, selectively added, re-sized, or covered. By reusing what we could from the two original units — french doors, cut-glass door knobs, small brass flourishes — the interior would have the sense of care and continuity we valued, and a level of intimate detail to both complement and set-off the new, more contemporary architectural lines. Except for a modest change in the direction of the back porch steps, the house's footprint would stay the same.

The day the contractor's demolition dumpster appeared like Goliath in the driveway, we moved out and Rocksteady Builders took over. For the next six months, teams of specialists came through: contractor and subcontractors, carpenters, HVAC techs, electricians, plumbers, plasterers, painters, floor refinishers. Each group assessed the house's changing situation, debated the merits of various approaches, carted in tools and materials, and set to its tasks accordingly. Monitoring the destruction and progress nearly every day, I was reminded how so many people worked to mend me back together when I was ill. The same unity of purpose, the same unavoidable rhythm of advances, setbacks, retrenchment, support. Some days were easy, full of success; others were sparked by friction: anger over crossed efforts and missed communication. I'd wander through, wondering about the end. I knew it surely was possible that out of such seeming chaos, could come order. Out of so much hard work, little by little, and then — almost as if all at once — could come a structure made newly strong, and, because of that, in its own way also beautiful.

Then, one morning, the teams moved out and everyone who'd helped us left. We opened the door to a space that was restored and renewed. Wherever we looked, light flowed serenely. The interior felt spacious and yet focused by quiet touches, never empty. We stepped inside, marveling. This brightness was ours, for at least this while: the construction of home and health. ■■■

Marcie Hershman is the author of the memoir, *Speak to Me: Grief, Love and What Endures* (Beacon) and the novels, *Tales of the Master Race* and *Safe in America* (HarperCollins). She teaches at Tufts University.

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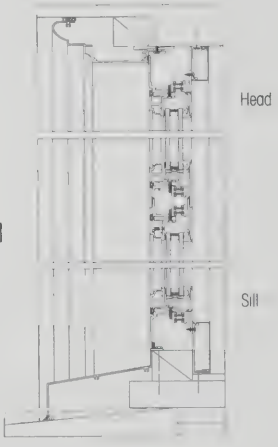

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ArchitectureBoston

November/December 2002

Hype

Subtlety is an under-rated virtue, doomed to the dustbin of lost social arts except for occasional appearances in Merchant-Ivory films featuring dustbins. After all, who has the time to figure out subtle messages anymore? Forget the lifted brow, the quivering lip. You have something to say, say it. The path to success lies in the hype, in going to extremes.

Going to extremes is learned behavior — learned in architecture schools, where students win over design juries with big, risky ideas; and reinforced in the profession by professional awards and publications, which often do not or cannot distinguish the marvelously subtle from the merely mundane. The result is extreme architecture, which sometimes resembles any other extreme sport: Exhilarating! Audacious! Perilous! Moreover, its practitioners bear an uncanny resemblance to the celebrities in any other extreme sport: decked out in cool gear, famous for being famous (although generally unknown to the world at large), studied by legions of wannabes. Performed by a small subset of the intellectually buff, extreme architecture unfortunately carries no "don't try this at home" label. And so lots of designers do try it, only to crash and burn. The landscape is littered with their attempts.

This is the predictable course of a field that increasingly depends upon hype in order to communicate ideas. The ideas go unchallenged as we focus only on the stunts — the leaps of imagination, the aerial somersaults — and turn them into gimmicks. Stripped of meaning, genuine feats of talent are dumbed down and mass-produced, duplicated without discrimination. Not only does this pattern fail to advance the field, but it also creates no small number of grotesqueries, such as Deconstructivist healthcare facilities for people who are often already disoriented. We don't even bother to guess regional identity anymore when looking at a photo of a new building; the more entertaining game is to determine if it is a house, an office building, or a civic structure. The louder the hype, the more we drain our buildings of meaning, because hype creates a climate of intellectual laziness. It is enough to borrow the segmented vault, the corner tower, the visor cornice line. Soon, even the stars go flabby, borrowing from themselves, because there's no need to push anymore.

Hype itself is not new: "The Emperor's New Clothes" is a story about hype, one that still conveys an important message: Hype works best when it preys upon our insecurities. Hans Christian Andersen's weaver-scoundrels described their fabric as "invisible to anyone who is too stupid and incompetent to appreciate its quality." His scoundrels have surely found a new home on today's architecture lecture circuit.

Hype is the unavoidable reality of commercial and cultural life today. We know we can overdo it (Y2K — 'nuff said), but we can't help ourselves. Hype generates its own momentum. But as the media increasingly become the message, the message becomes less important.

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA
Editor

2 **Letters to the Editor**

8 **Buzz Cuts:**
The hyping, spinning, buzzing, pumping, and jazzing of architecture
A roundtable discussion with:
Robert Campbell FAIA, Dan Kennedy,
Ted Landsmark, Assoc. AIA,
James Morrison, Elizabeth Padjen FAIA,
Tom Simons, and Nader Tehrani

22 **The Hype of the New Modernism**
by John King

26 **Architects, Politics, and the Art of the Hype:**
Why architects need *more* hype
by George Bachrach

30 **Spin Cycle:**
Architecture and the construction of hype
by Deborah K. Dietsch

38 **Pattern Language**
Richard Saul Wurman FAIA talks with
Jeff Stein AIA

46 **Two Views:**
Specialty Certification
by Joan L. Saba AIA, FACHA
by Charles Redmon FAIA

50 **Letter from Bilbao**
by Mikel Murga, MSCE, ICCP

54 **Covering the Issues:**
Periodical roundup
by Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA

56 **Books**

59 **Index to Advertisers**

59 **Site Work**
Web sites of note

60 **Other Voices:**
Cuba
by Andrei Codrescu

Cover photo: Times Square, New York City
by John T. Hill ©2002

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We invite story ideas that connect architecture to social, cultural, political, economic, or business trends. Editorial guidelines are posted at: www.architects.org

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Letters

As architects with extensive backgrounds in the design of "healing environments," we could not agree more with Joan Wickersham's assessment that hospitals alone do not make one well ["Where Am I? The city as a place of healing," September/October 2002]. It is certainly true that hospitals were transformed from therapeutic environments to curative ones sometime between the development of germ theory and the emergent Cold War. Fascinated with our science and threatened by (airborne) unknowns, we took knife-edged, machine-age building assemblies to new heights in mid-century hospital design. Artificial light, sealed windows, complex mechanical systems, ever-enlarged floor plates, and antiseptic white, hard-surface interiors hinted at terms like "efficiency," "cleanliness," "safety," but rarely at healing.

Arguably, an environment of fear created the same operational secrecy that alienated people from each other, their bodies, and their surroundings. Even hospitals in dense urban areas disconnected from their immediate neighborhoods. Doctors professionalized, hospitals organized, and architects constructed cool, impervious spaces to match the level-headedness of our rational minds. Finally, with the industrialism of managed care and corporatism of hospital mergers — cost containment, increased competition, staffing shortages — the experience became fully depersonalized. What was intended to be a "democratized experience" in modern medical treatment instead became a series of abstract specialties in the healthcare delivery system.

Time and again we are awestruck by the realization that healing starts from within. The sick do need the contagion of life, as do the well or the injured. Whether healing comes from the wildness of nature, the ordered chaos of a city grown haywire, or the vibrancy of inner peace and clarity, these are things society must recognize and design for. To exclude these from hospital design would be shortsighted.

As the built environment shifts toward the subtleties of a healing message, doctors and hospital staff will not be the only sources of information, nor will the value of a hospital be measured solely by its ability to cure. These new "healing environments" will support general well-being, and will also allow patients and their families ownership in the recovery process. Creating true healing environments will be a mutually restorative journey, one that the profession is right to embrace as well.

Robin Guenther AIA and Cynthia Atwood
Guenther 5 Architects, PLLC
New York City

A number of important themes emerge in your "Health" issue [September/October 2002]. One theme is the lack of attention to architectural research in design education; a second, and related, theme is the difficulty in finding the research that does exist. As designers themselves become more comfortable with the idea of doing design research, or at least recognize the importance of research as opposed to anecdote, the quality of the built environment will improve. Groat and Wang's 2002 *Architectural Research Methods* is a significant step in providing a curriculum for research methods in design. Other volumes such as Verderber and Fine's *Healthcare Architecture in an Era of Radical Transformation*, Shepley's *Healthcare Environments for Children and Their Families*, and Carpman and Grant's *Design that Cares: Planning Health Facilities for Patients and Visitors* incorporate the findings of healthcare research. The Center for Health Design also holds an annual conference that exposes designers and administrators to research in healthcare.

But the quality of the built environment is not the sole responsibility of designers. Researchers need to do a better job not only of disseminating their findings, but also of making them understandable to potential clients as well as designers. In your roundtable discussion, "Buildings, Health, and Well-being," John Zeisel mentions the importance of marketing and of building on success stories. If their work is going to make a difference, academics need to move beyond specialized journals such as *Environment and Behavior*, the *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, and the *Environmental Design Research Association Proceedings* and write pieces for lay publications and discuss their work on television.

ArchitectureBoston can also play a significant role. In addition to raising this important

issue for your readership, why not end your articles with links to Web sites of interest and a list of recommended readings?

Ann Sloan Devlin
May Buckley Sadowski '19 Professor of Psychology, Connecticut College
New London, Connecticut

Editor's note: We do indeed publish such lists from time to time (also note our "Site Work" feature), but we thank Professor Devlin for providing an excellent bibliography! We also invite story queries from academics and researchers who wish to reach broader audiences.

The article "Money Talks" by Scott Simpson FAIA [Summer 2002] is subtitled "Learning the language of finance," but contains repeated use of the term "fiduciary responsibility" that is either inappropriate in its misuse, or seriously threatening to the profession if its use is intentional.

In the language of finance, "fiduciary responsibility" is a term of art that includes personal liability for the protection and stewardship of other people's money. While the tone of the article purports to advocate a greater degree of respect for the owner's financial and budget requirements on the part of architects, that is a far cry from advocating imposition of a fiduciary responsibility on the architect for the delivery of normal professional services.

Recently there have been several instances where attorneys have attempted to bring action against architects based on the novel theory that the architect has an inherent or contractual fiduciary responsibility to the owner, simply because construction work is risky and involves large sums of money. I know of no informed or responsible architect who would view the application of fiduciary responsibility as anything other than an uninsured source of new liability which architects are neither trained nor prepared to shoulder.

If the author intended to argue for greater fiscal responsibility, that is fine, but in the language of finance, there is a world of difference between fiscal responsibility and fiduciary responsibility.

For the sake of individual practitioners, for the sake of the American Institute of Architects, and for the sake of the profession, I hope no architect takes the author's advice to embrace fiduciary responsibility as "an essential part of any architect's job."

Mark R. Mendell AIA, MRAIC
President
Cannon Design
Boston

Editor's note: Because of the significance of and potential controversy in Mark Mendell's letter, we solicited responses from an attorney and a CPA familiar with construction law and practice. Their letters follow.

As Mr. Mendell correctly points out, the word "fiduciary" has a particular meaning for trustees and other financial stewards. However, it is also broadly defined in *Black's Law Dictionary* (7th Edition) as "one who owes to another the duties of good faith, trust, confidence and candor." Who among us would argue that architects do not owe these duties to their clients?

To the best of my knowledge, the recent demonization of the word arose out of a California lawsuit in which the trial court judge held that an architect's field representative had a "fiduciary duty" to inform the client of construction defects of which the field rep had actual knowledge. The architecture firm issued a well-publicized cry of alarm in an attempt to mobilize opposition to this characterization of its duty, but the judge's analysis seemed to me to be consistent with what generations of architectural students have been taught by my friend and mentor Carl Sapers: good faith, trust, confidence, and candor are hallmarks of the professionalism that clients should expect and to which architects should aspire.

For this reason, I would hate to see "fiduciary" join "supervision," "approval," and now even "observation" on the list of prohibited words, to the further detriment of architects' professional stature.

Christopher L. Noble, Esq.
Hill & Barlow
Boston

In response to the alleged misuse of the word "fiduciary," my opinion is that no other word would suffice. To shy away from the role of the client's fiduciary is just another nail in the coffin of the profession, another form of distancing ourselves from the people whom we serve.

In the most perfect relationships with our benefactors, we are entrusted with their money to bring them something of which they know little. In the best of circumstances, we are asked to produce magic with their dearest asset — money. We are caretakers for their future. This is precisely the role that construction managers and program managers are convinced we cannot provide anymore. They whisper it in the ears of the clients they have and promote it loudly to the clients they want to get.

Just as you would ask your financial fiduciary to provide you with the best return on your money, clients are asking architects for the best architecture for their money. I see no difference.

James Dunn, CPA, Principal
Goody Clancy & Associates
Boston

I read with interest the roundtable discussion in your "Preservation" issue ["Moving Forward: The Future of History," Spring 2002], particularly the comments on Hans Hollein's proposed office building on Mt. Auburn Street in Cambridge. In my view, that project will be viewed in the years to come as the fulcrum for change in the architectural future for Cambridge.

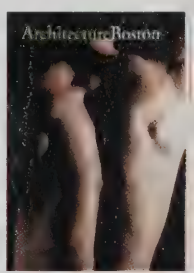
That this wonderful, contextual building — which would have spoken subtly about authentic architecture and would have respectfully fit into its niche with a brilliance that can only be understood when the glaze of academic thinking is rinsed clean from critical view — will not adorn Cambridge's Harvard Square is a terrible loss. Hollein found a way to incorporate contemporary functions using today's technology with an expression of form that reflects our culture now. It would have addressed the street with a gesture that would have been inviting, sheltering, and delightful.

The architectural establishment spoke as it historically always has, pooh-poohing the great works as "not appropriate" or not "respectful." Since when has "respectful" been responsible for great or even good architecture? Think of the other architectural renegades that match the roundtable's description of "not fitting in": Wright's Guggenheim; the Seagram Building; the Carpenter Center.

I am saddened that the academic and preservation communities have decided that a building that more than likely would have been enthusiastically embraced by the public did not merit even a timid leap forward to a fresh way of seeing.

Garry W. Gardner AIA
Cohasset, Massachusetts

Editor's Note: We have received numerous letters from readers wondering why they weren't credited for the use of their torso on our September/October cover. (See inset.) A tough economy stimulates the entrepreneurial spirit. *ArchitectureBoston* is therefore selling naming rights to the torso. Publisher Richard Fitzgerald will entertain bids that are entertaining: rfitzgerald@architects.org



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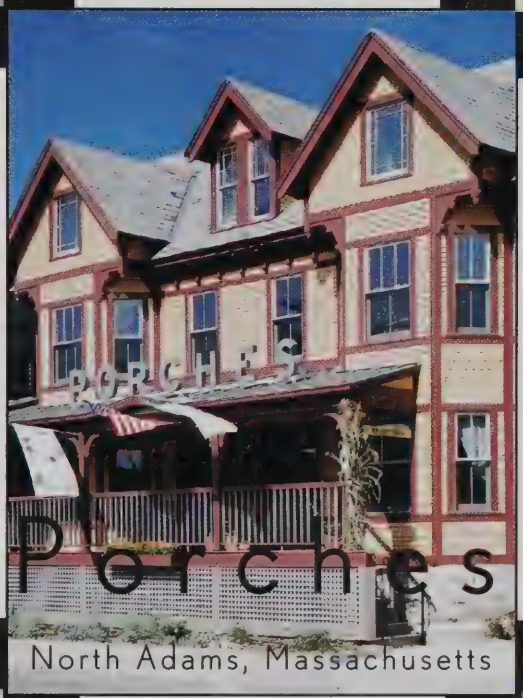

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The Porches Inn

North Adams, Massachusetts

At the site, a custom Marvin Tilt Pac and a competitor's insert window had been installed. The Tilt Pac truly represented the original window and was picked as the window of choice. While measuring for the Tilt Pacs, it was discovered that the original windows and frames were found to be in a far more serious state of decay. Upon further review, it was decided that Tilt Pacs were not the answer. All concerned parties felt there was a better way.

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Buzz Cuts

The hyping, spinning, buzzing, pumping, and jazzing of architecture

Robert Campbell FAIA is an architect and the architecture critic of the *Boston Globe* and a winner of the Pulitzer Prize for criticism.

Dan Kennedy is a freelance journalist and the media critic for the *Boston Phoenix* and is a winner of the National Press Club's Rowse Award for Press Criticism.

Ted Landsmark, Assoc. AIA, is the president of the Boston Architectural Center.

James Morrison is a lecturer in communication at MIT in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning.

Elizabeth Padjen FAIA is the editor of *ArchitectureBoston*.

Tom Simons is president of PARTNERS+simons, an advertising and marketing communications firm in Boston.

Nader Tehrani is a principal of Office dA and an adjunct associate professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

Elizabeth Padjen: "Hype" means different things to different people and has varying connotations, both positive and negative. I recently talked about hype with Paul Nakazawa, an architect and management consultant. In response to my suggestion that hype is part of a progression that begins with communication, proceeds to promotion and persuasion, and ends with hype, he offered these definitions:

> "Hype" is the emotive positioning or cloaking of a message that overtakes rational content as a method for producing mass conviction, action, or complicity. "Communication" implies some degree of intellectual, political, or social symmetry between the parties engaged in communicating, a dialogue. "Promotion" implies a partial breakdown in this symmetry, relying upon the power of one party to convince another (not necessarily in dialogue). Promotion generally recognizes the boundaries of specific audiences and the power of individual choice. Hype, however, is less discriminating regarding the specificity of audience, and seeks to create direction and momentum through the enlistment of masses of people. As such, "hype" is an essential feature of consumer culture, where acceleration and velocity of mass conviction, action, and complicity fuel the requisite volume of sales (for products, services, entertainment, buildings.) and the dispersion of social/political attention necessary to maintain the prevailing system of global economy and control.

Antonio di Mambro, an architect and urban designer, put it another way: "Hype is about power and the use of power." Let's start by putting your own definitions on the table.

Ted Landsmark: It has struck me — perhaps because my own training is in law and in architecture — that the profession of architecture relies more than any other profession on hype as an intrinsic element of the marketing of both individuals within the profession and of the profession itself. By "hype" I mean inflation, often a gross over-inflation, of the inherent value of the product that is produced by the profession, in ways that are designed to enhance the bottom-line performance and operational stability of firms. It is my experience that other trained professionals do not rely on that kind of aggressive marketing and inflation of value in the same way.

Robert Campbell: I would define hype as deliberately overstated praise for marketing purposes, usually expressed through the media.

Tom Simons: Implicit in these definitions of hype is the notion of going too far or trying too hard to call attention to oneself. I think that there is recognition that something that's hyped is regarded as lacking in substance to such an extent that it requires the added value of hyperbole. It's assumed that the proposition cannot stand on its own merit.

James Morrison: Hype also includes a dimension of what might be called social infection. Meaning that hype isn't just a process by which a communicator attempts to promote his or her product in emotional ways to individuals, but in a sense tries to create what Richard Dawkins calls a meme, a self-replicating virus that goes from person to person. It's like the old Revlon commercial: "and so on and so on and so on...."

Dan Kennedy: There's probably broad agreement on what hype is. What we've seen in Boston in the last ten years in particular are a number of visions that we are now realizing have been hype all along. We really have to think about the extent to which the media passed along, amplified, even helped create some of that hype, and what really is going to happen to the quality of life in the city as we recognize that some of these visions turn out to have been hype.

***ArchitectureBoston* solicited nominations for people/ideas/things that have been overhyped. The results follow...**

Peter Vanderwarker
Architectural photographer
West Newton
Massachusetts

Bee Gees
The Carpenters
"Water World"
The Pru
Carpenter Center

Thomas Kinkade ("painter of light")
"Ishtar"
Fallingwater
J. Paul Getty Museum

Nader Tehrani: All of these definitions and interpretations, although I would concur with many of them, overlook a kind of double-edged sword. All of them seem to assume a pejorative slant, a notion that there's something deceptive about hype. But isn't there always an element of deception in any representation or truth that is being constructed? All these definitions assume that there is some essential truth and overlook the relativism of competing interpretations. But even in law, isn't the element of persuasion and rhetoric more important than the truth? So how can any architecture be immune to some form of hype? When is hype constructive? When does it have a kind of negative outcome?

Jack Agnew	**The Anna Nicole Smith Show**
Senior Counsel	**The latest Austin Powers movie**
MS&L Public Relations	**Bruce Springsteen's "final" tour**
Boston	**Jennifer Lopez**

Paul Master-Karnik	**Starbuck's Coffee**
Executive Director	**E-commerce**
DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park	**Mitt Romney**
Lincoln, Massachusetts	**Reality TV**
	Britney Spears

Elizabeth Padjen: Ted's observations suggest that the architecture profession has a certain need to indulge in hype. But that raises the question of what it is that architects and architecture are aligning themselves with. We didn't invent hype. You can argue that we are simply in resonance with the rest of popular culture.

Robert Campbell: It does occur in other professions — the Dr. Atkins diet, the television lawyers who tell you how they're going to save you money on your divorce. Do you really think it's more common in architecture?

Ted Landsmark: Yes. Law firms, for example, don't self-publish books of the examples of their best cases, although they could. Accountants could publish materials about the creative ways that they have managed clients' accounts. But we don't see that. And yet, in architecture it has become increasingly common for a firm to self-publish, often at great expense, books that basically are puff pieces for the work that the firm does. Scores of them are sent to design-school libraries as though they are scholarly texts analyzing the work of those firms, when they are actually compilations of marketing brochures.

Robert Campbell: Surely a lot of it has to do with the fact that architecture is publishable. You can communicate it with pictures, and so it can be launched into a much broader world. The brief that is written for a law office is not going to reach a wide audience.

Ted Landsmark: That's absolutely true. But it's also counter-intuitive that one would feel the need to publish a text, when in fact all one really has to do is send the client to the site to see the work. The building is there for the public to experience. These self-published books and the magazines present a simplistic and superficial sense of style that is used to market the work. My concern is that by not focusing on the intrinsic value added by the architect as a manager of a building process, rather than merely as a stylist, hype tends to diminish the perceived value of the entire profession in the public's eye.

Tom Simons: My observations are that hype and marketing are a part of every professional service. And I don't see any material difference between the self-published texts of architects and a law firm deciding to publish intellectual property to express its legal approach. In my little world, I would suggest that hype is really the preoccupation of two different types of people. On the one hand there are the people who try to use it in order to overcome some perceived shortcoming, or to slather some style onto their offering. It's also the preoccupation of those people who think that they need to clean up hype pollution or save people from themselves or else they will fall prey to this insidious tactic. And in reality, I think that consumers are very hype-literate — they recognize what's hype and what's authenticity. Consumers are much smarter than folks generally give them credit for. They don't need to be saved from themselves.

Rebecca G. Barnes FAIA
Chief Planner
Boston Redevelopment Authority

In economics	The Market
In politics	Every day's miniscule events
In culture	Violence
In religion	Righteousness
In society	Bark mulch

Elizabeth Padjen: "Hype-literate" is a good phrase. We've been exposed to so much of this — marketing, advertising, hype — that we know all the formulas. But what happens when you keep upping the ante? Do we become increasingly knowledgeable? Or do we just get cynical?

Tom Simons: In some respects, hype is a bit like cholesterol. There's good hype and there's bad hype. I think the inflatable lock on the Fortress building, which I had a hand in, is good hype. It's goofy, but it's good hype. However, I saw some materials for a law firm the other day — they had taken a picture of the Lenny Zakim Bridge and slapped it on the cover of their brochure to leverage the grace and the sentiment of that structure. And I don't think that fools anybody. That's bad hype.

Elizabeth Padjen: I'd like to ask Bob and Dan about the role of the print media in this. How do you see your role in terms of cutting through the hype at the same time that you may be inadvertently contributing to it?

Robert Campbell: I don't ever consciously think of myself as cutting through hype or dealing with hype. If I don't believe it, I just ignore it. I've never written about a building I didn't actually go to and experience and try to understand. But I am constrained, by myself, not by anyone else, to tell a story. There's no point in writing if you don't have a story to tell. If you're writing about architecture, you're not a consumer guide like a theater critic — people aren't going to buy tickets to go see the building. And so you do simplify, you do make stories. And one of the stories you often make is, "Wow! Frank Gehry has done a building like nobody's ever seen before in Bilbao, Spain. You should all rush to see it." Well, it is a pretty exciting building, but one falls quickly into the trap of acting as if that was all that mattered. Of course it's not. I wouldn't call the padlock on the building hype. I think hype in architecture has to do with the romantic image of the architect as someone rising in this Nietzchean way above the common herd with amazing, original new ideas that have never been seen before. We identify with that because we'd all like to be Superman, too.

The loner, the Howard Roark persona, is still very much a part of the personalities of people like Rem Koolhaas. You see that in many other fields, too, but for some reason architects, more than other professionals anyway, are seen as having the opportunity to become these creative loners who are beyond "the mass of men who lead lives of quiet desperation." And so people become famous for being famous. Rem Koolhaas is an obvious example, but I would say an even better example is Steven Holl, who really became famous for being famous, having done very little in the way of architecture. As yet.

Dan Kennedy: With the exception of a few very smart architecture critics like Bob, the media don't really deal with architecture; they deal with urban planning. Obviously, there's an intersection between architecture and urban planning. We talked about the public becoming hype-aware. I don't think that the elected class is very hype-aware, and I don't think the media have been very hype-aware. I'll cite one example that we all know about, and that's the new convention center, which was presented as a way of anchoring the rebirth of the South Boston waterfront. Right from the beginning there were a few lonely critics saying that the demand in a high-cost city such as Boston is not going to be that great. Those concerns were ignored. We're moving ahead with the construction of the convention center. It may work out, I imagine we all hope it does work out, but it doesn't look good. I think the media could have been more skeptical and more immune to the hype surrounding the convention center from the beginning. If they had been, we all might have been better off. I would go so far as to say that if the *Globe* had come out against the convention center editorially, rather than cheerleading it on, it might never have happened.

Robert Campbell: That's an interesting case because we need the convention center like a hole in the head. Those are issues of economics and politics that I don't consider appropriate for me to write about. But as a building, the original design was outstanding. You've got two opposite things at work.

photo courtesy Massachusetts Convention Center Authority

Boston's new convention center, promoted as a key to the rebirth of the South Boston waterfront.

Fallingwater, promoted for bold structural engineering and as a visionary response to a site.

photo © fallingwater courtesy of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

Elizabeth Padjen: Dan is making a very interesting distinction between journalism and the hype that occurs intramurally within the architectural family. Architects get jazzed about something that the rest of the world might not know about until somehow we pass along a celebrity figure that we offer up to the larger world. I still remember the image from the early to mid-'80s of Philip Johnson on the cover of *Time*. The first of the Nosferatu look-alikes. To some degree, we ourselves are creating these personality cults that we pass along to the media, which are always searching for something new. It feels as though architecture is becoming part of an increasingly blurry entertainment medium.

Robert Campbell: It is seen as a romantic escape from the day-to-day lives that most of us lead. The Greeks had their gods and they argued about who was sleeping with whom among the gods. We have our stars and we do exactly the same thing. I go to parties and people are talking about who just divorced whom in Hollywood as if they were talking about their friends. As we grow lonelier and lonelier in our actual lives, we make friends with the stars and talk about them. And now a few architects have taken their places in that extraordinary cloud of stars.

Nader Tehrani: Let's face it: the stakes in architecture are radically low. The accountants, the lawyers, the doctors — they are all happy because their financial means do not require them to produce an alternative world in which status compensates for the financial lack. Most of the architects I know, both famous and unknown, are quibbling over pennies to include features in their projects that have no broader social value other than the intrinsic contribution they make to knowledge within the discipline itself. They have value within the discipline, but they do not elicit significant social or political change. Our stakes are therefore so low that we don't really have many significant advocates out there. That creates a challenge for the few advocates we do have. Bob Campbell's role, for example, is at once to faithfully critique work, but also to place architecture as a relevant practice within the broader cultural sphere. That's a very difficult thing to balance. And so you see architects having to create their own hype in order to say simply, "We exist."

Tom Simons: Architects cite statistics about the relatively small percentage of buildings that are actually designed by architects. If that's true, one wonders why that is. I think one can only conclude that there isn't sufficient demand, and the only way to turn that around is to try to cultivate greater demand. And you can do that through advocacy on the one hand, or through hype on the other hand, with all sorts of tactics available in between. But I would suggest in the physics of marketing, if there are limited opportunities, people respond with hype. They want to make sure that they get their opportunity. I may be naïve about it, but I don't think it's a whole lot more complicated than that.

Robert Campbell: Architects have always hyped themselves. Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier hyped their careers from beginning to end with every kind of exaggeration both public and private. I think something else that's pushing this is the issue of fund-raising. Buildings used to be built by a small club of patrician donors. But now if you want to build a building you've got to involve the whole world. And if you have a star architect, or if you have a powerful architectural image, your job is suddenly easier. College presidents have said to me, "We want to hire this architect because it will be easier to get donations." Certainly the Museum of Fine Arts felt that way in hiring Foster, and we see other examples of that. Donations come from a much broader field than they once did and that makes powerful stars much more important.

Ted Landsmark: If hype is something that anyone has access to — I think that's true in a democracy — then why is it that it only seems to work for men in this field? Why is it that despite all of the access to hype that women architects could have, that when one picks up magazines and publications one never sees stories about the work of outstanding women architects? Zaha Hadid and Maya Lin being the exceptions. Why does that happen? And if we know that hype is an essential part of this field, what should we be teaching the next generation of professionals about how they might use it?

Jane Holtz Kay
Architecture/planning critic for *The Nation* and author of *Lost Boston* and *Asphalt Nation*

Nader Tehrani: You don't have to teach students to market themselves. They already have to market themselves when they're in school, because the way the schools are intellectually and socially stratified sets up a system of mentorship, of design camps, of studios, of awards. You have to get up and present your work. You have to sell yourself in front of both students and critics, possibly critics who will become the very people who might launch your business or your future in the world. You end up marketing yourself from the very first semester in school, even in the way that you dress to go to the crits. Who wears leather pants at a review constitutes its own kind of hype.

Robert Campbell: The two women Ted mentioned who have benefited at a significant level from hype, Lin and Hadid, both work in a realm that's much more iconic, much more symbolic, and that has much less to do with actually getting things constructed. If that represented any kind of trend, more women would have benefited from that, but that hasn't helped them necessarily.

Elizabeth Padjen: I think we're making at least one false assumption. I'm not sure Hadid is recognized much outside the profession. Let's ask our two normal people — Dan? Tom?

Tom Simons: No.

Dan Kennedy: I think that's an example of one of your intramural celebrities.

Elizabeth Padjen: But you have heard of Maya Lin. We all came to know of Maya Lin through a really great story: the kid at Yale, sudden recognition of an unknown talent, young woman up against powerful men in Washington. The success of the design, which is not to be denied, was packaged with the story in a very powerful way. It's exactly the kind of story that Americans love to hear. Architects would see this first as a design story, but it became a people story, a lifestyle story.

Dan Kennedy: And of course she had to speak out on a number of occasions to defend the integrity of what she was doing. So that brought her into the spotlight much more than if she had simply stayed in the background.

Robert Campbell: She has also, interestingly enough, significantly edited the story of how that design was created. Perhaps we all do that to some extent — the story becomes a little better.

Elizabeth Padjen: What makes an architecture story capture the attention of the general media? Can you think of other design stories that somehow have been captured in the general media?

Dan Kennedy: Everybody knew who designed the John Hancock tower because all the windows were falling out. This was an architecture story that the media picked up on and it became a big story. There seemed to be a consensus that the Hancock building was a very fine piece of architecture, but I don't think that's what the public was necessarily focusing on. They were focusing on the fact the windows were falling out. And that seems to be what drives these stories — it's not so much the architecture but the issues surrounding the architecture.

Garage at Post Office Square
Boston Harbor Hotel
John Hancock building
Post-Big Dig plans
Zakim Bridge

John Scola
Vice President, Global Branding
Monster
Maynard, Massachusetts

Anna Nicole Smith
The Segway transportation device
Economic recovery
Not leaving kids in cars when getting a cup of coffee
The stock market

Boston's Zakim Bridge, promoted as the widest cable-stayed bridge in the world.

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Charles Redmon FAIA
Architect
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Signature architects
Importance of CAD in creating good design
Educating architects
Ground Zero
Bricks in Boston

Elizabeth Padjen: Another local example is the recent brouhaha over Boston's City Hall Plaza. Architects tend to define that as a design story. How would you characterize the public's response?

Dan Kennedy: That's an interesting example of hype that never really came to pass, because ever since Mayor Menino came into office, there's been a perception that he was going to do something about it. And for whatever reason, he really hasn't. There was the proposal to build a hotel there, but the discussion was quickly reduced to an almost mindless formulation: "Oh, you're cutting down on open space; you can't do that." So it quickly died. And I think as far as the public is concerned, the Plaza is simply a place that hasn't worked. It's broiling hot in the summer, freezing cold in the winter, and isn't it a shame that nobody can do anything about it.

Tom Simons: I have a real sense that people didn't know that the Plaza didn't work until they were told so. I'm afraid to think that it's all a form of hype designed to engender another commission.

Robert Campbell: What a lot of people dislike about the Plaza and especially City Hall is largely stylistic; people do respond to style. City Hall doesn't look like a building to them, and it also looks very aggressive and rejecting. An analogy I like is language. If you speak English, everybody understands. If the language evolves too rapidly, then people drop out because they don't understand it anymore. There's a natural speed of cultural change and growth that keeps people in touch while you're still innovating at the edges. I think we sometimes break forward too fast.

Nader Tehrani: This also has to do with the problem that the public is marginally educated in architecture — so any architectural movement of any consequence may be perceived as being elitist or rarefied. But any advanced form of knowledge is always only partially accessible to the broader public. If people are not educated in a certain area, they then have to develop opinions and positions based upon those of others — of critics, educators, writers.

Ted Landsmark: We have been talking about the work of individual architects in relation to hype, and the ability of those architects to take advantage of the publicity that surrounds their efforts to realize a vision. But all of the hype that surrounded the success of City Hall as a 1960s Brutalist icon means nothing to the people who have to work in the building, to the people who presumably are the end-users of this architectural product. So what happens as a consequence of the hype, even 40 years later, is that we still refer to City Hall as an award-winning building, and we make constant unquestioned reference to that kind of monumentality as a representation of city government. But many of us who worked in the building were always disturbed by the fact that the image it really sends is not one that's inviting and open or one that is likely to be read by the public as encouraging open participation in government. So what hype does is to serve the profession in terms of rewarding an egotistical outcome, without necessarily carrying with it any burden of public service.

Elizabeth Padjen: That's an interesting observation. We tend to think of hype as an ephemeral phenomenon — a constant process of moving on to the next new thing. But hype does indeed linger.

Nader Tehrani: Yes, although Warhol's notion of 15 minutes of fame is still an operative model. That's the Hollywood model. That's the rock star model. When I was in school, it was Fred Koetter, and now it's Rem. I don't know — maybe it's Gregg Lynn next. The question is, Who's in it for the long haul? The answer will depend upon the kind of values they are instilling in the discipline, the ways in which they are reinventing practice, and the forms of knowledge they are producing.

Ted Landsmark: Some of that ephemeral quality in architectural hype may be due to the fact that many of the people who are the beneficiaries of hype have built very little and frequently have not actually built anything. Their work exists as proposals or studies. It's like Manolo Blahnik shoes — which are so hot because they showed up on *Sex and the City*. But would we know about them if it weren't for two or three fashion publications? Would we know about architects like Steven Holl if it weren't for the two or three magazines that hype their ideas and enable them to become household names without regard to the actual experience of their work? My great disappointment is that what is published pays very little attention to anything that gives you a sense of the experience of the space. It's all about fabulous photographs.

Robert Campbell: I think you're right. I think we all feel something has changed. The magazines used to publish plans much more often. They used to talk about process, program, and clients much more than they do now. I think the advent of color was the dividing line; the magazines became much more visual and much less interested in the other issues.

Anthony Flint
The Boston Globe

Rem Koolhaas
Frank Gehry
"Open space" on Boston's Central Artery
"Smart Growth" or "New Urbanism" development projects
Critics of BRT [Bus Rapid Transit]/the Silver Line

photo courtesy of GreatBuildings.com ©Artfile Ltd.

Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, promoted as an urban economic catalyst.

Dan Kennedy: One of the things I find interesting is that there must be a great deal of difference between what the handful of these celebrity architects does as opposed to what the vast majority of architects does. I'm freelancing this year, and one of the places where I've been invited to hang out is a small-town architect's office; they have an extra desk that I use. The principals are a couple of architects living out in the suburbs doing suburban-type projects, and from listening to them it seems like a lot of their work involves dealing with unreasonable demands from the local planning board and trying to get clients to pay them.

Elizabeth Padjen: That about sums it up, doesn't it?

Dan Kennedy: I find it fascinating. They are obviously living in a world without hype, and I wonder — what is it that the vast majority of architects does that would be substantially different from what this handful of celebrities does?

James Morrison: At some level, the celebrities' offices do the same things. But the guy at the top may be doing very little besides marketing or initiating the first sketches of a design.

Nader Tehrani: Architecture is delivered by and through committees now. And so creating consensus with the preservation group, the neighborhood committee, the business group, convincing the trustees and steering committee and all of that, is actually a very serious task. And if Frank Gehry is not doing some of that himself, he probably has some very significant players in the office who do and may or may not get credit. But that is an essential part of all of this. What gets covered in the media is only the glitz of the curved wall. But complaining about planning boards and not getting paid is a significant part of those practices, too, not just small-town practices. Frank Gehry is also not getting paid. He also has to hire a lawyer. You're never immune to those issues. The question then is who tries to embrace those very issues that are about practice as a vehicle to produce Architecture with a big "A."

Elizabeth Padjen: One of the ways that people try to deal with that and deal with the issues that Dan raises is to create momentum. With momentum, at some point success is inevitable. The planning board is going to cave, the opposition is going to cave, and the accolades are going to come in. How do you do that? The guy in the small office in the suburb has a very hard time getting enough traction to get that momentum going. A Frank Gehry walks in with it, and there's an immediate juggernaut.

Nader Tehrani: Personally, I can say that our firm would not exist without the *PA* [*Progressive Architecture*] awards, which became the basis for all of the hype that brought us to where we are now. Whether we're good or not is a separate issue. But I'm saying that the publication and the proliferation of the magazine, which happened nationally and internationally, were obviously central to actually getting the commissions to build some of these things. Some of the designs that were questioned by the clients or the trustees became accepted because they were legitimized by the award's "seal of approval."

Elizabeth Padjen: Let's trace that because it's an interesting case study. Name the projects that won *PA* awards.

Nader Tehrani: The first was the Alabama house. That was at the beginning of the last economic downturn and it was never built. In fact, none of those projects, which were all real commissions, were built except for the China project, which is about to break ground now. The Venezuela House was not built because of a family tragedy. The Weston House was built, but incorrectly. The Bilbao House is still on the sidelines waiting to happen. Then we had the Wayland project, a masterplan for the center of town, which involved over 70 meetings with different community groups to get the momentum

James L. Mitchell III
Director of Corporate Development
Richard White Sons
Auburndale, Massachusetts

Value engineering
The "paperless" office
E business
The Red Sox
The recession

Photo courtesy World Architecture Awards

Architecture awards, promoted as recognition of design excellence.

going. It got the award, but the political process necessary to get it through the town of Wayland ultimately killed the project. The China project was the most recent.

Elizabeth Padjen: And all that happened in a relatively short period of time.

Nader Tehrani: All of that happened within five to seven years. Submitting to the *PA* awards was a yearly ritual for us, like many other people. And the reason you do it is very simple. On the one hand, you're trying to give legitimacy to your practice for your clients and patrons. If you are teaching as well, it also becomes a vehicle for scholarship. Publication is part of the process that in certain places will get you tenure.

Robert Campbell: Many firms, like Venturi Scott Brown and Machado and Silvetti, began the same way. Would you say that the *PA* awards that you won constitute hype as we were discussing it? And did they misrepresent your work as being primarily formal?

Nader Tehrani: I think the *PA* awards illustrate the dangers of hype quite clearly. The way in which the jurors' comments are edited makes them quite reductive, and often trivial — even if the discussions in the deliberations were quite polemical. Sometimes the selection of drawings for a certain project are so misguided that it is impossible to understand the project, or worse yet, it demonstrates that the editors misunderstood the point of the project. At their best, the awards are a very important forum that gauges new forms of knowledge — a barometer of things to come.

Ted Landsmark: Hype is clearly useful with certain clients who want the cachet of someone who is well-known, as opposed to a suburban architect who might be a great architect but doesn't automatically bring that marketing cachet. It gets you in the door but it doesn't necessarily guarantee that the project is going to be able to proceed to completion. And it still doesn't seem to help in terms of generating more work for architects across the profession.

To the extent that there is a public perception that architects are largely rewarded on the basis of their ability to hype things that often go unbuilt, we perpetuate a broadly accepted public perception that the work of architects can be marginalized, and therefore undervalued, and therefore under-compensated. So as much as hype is intrinsic to the marketing of virtually every profession, I think our own reliance upon it has tended to place us economically in a position where the public has a perception that it's OK to underpay us because it's all about hype anyway.

James Morrison: But I think we're missing the point that it would be very strange if hype were *not* part of the equation. That there would have to be some sort of oddity about architecture as a profession, were it not to be part of this same dynamic that's going on in virtually every other aspect of the arts. And I think that's one of the things that is at work here, that architecture — granted it has so many connections with other things, such as urban planning, project management, construction, and so forth — is one of the arts. It is natural for promotion to be part of the mix.

Elizabeth Padjen: If hype is in fact an inherent aspect of the arts and therefore architecture, what does that suggest about architecture as a communication medium?

James Morrison: I suppose you could start with the notion that every human artifact is an extension of our faculties and therefore a medium in itself. I think architecture is one of the most obvious applications of that idea. The whole notion of architecture seems to be to create environments. Walter Benjamin observed that architecture is a combination of both the tactile and the visual. And the concern that I hear expressed at this table about style over substance relates very directly to that. That seems to me to be a concern about the overemphasis of the visual and an underemphasis of the tactile. An underemphasis

of the idea that these are living spaces that are being created for people to live their lives in. That is being overlooked in favor of a flashier, more visual kind of emphasis.

Robert Campbell: You mention the difference between the visual and the tactile and I realize we're talking about it in a room in which we are surrounded by an exhibition of the work of New England architects, all of which is conveyed as images — not a single word, not a plan, not a section, not a context drawing. I think we have to blame a lot of this hype on the simple fact that photography came into existence. And what does a photograph do but frame something off from context? Photography is the removal of context and the removal of words and the removal of a lot of other things that might be part of describing buildings. In the electronic age it appears that images are verging toward the iconic. And I think many of the designs that we look to as examples of cutting-edge architecture take on a kind of iconic character. So the image then starts to take over from the reality. It doesn't even matter if the building burns down or deteriorates. It lives on in mental space.

Tom Simons: One thing that is common to both our worlds, architecture and advertising, is the phenomenon of extraordinary visualizations of the project long before it's ever actually approved or designed or realized — *before* it can be photographed. People look at these images of things that aren't really there, yet are completely imagined, divined. Sometimes it horrifies them. It's not unlike the IPO phenomenon, the hype over the promise of an IPO, which people have learned to distrust.

Elizabeth Padjen: Another analogy might be that an architect's portfolio of unbuilt work is like vaporware in the software industry. It's probably no accident that software people absconded with the word "architecture."

Tom Simons: One of the most interesting aspects of this discussion has been learning that in architecture there is an extraordinary currency in projects that aren't realized. Without being the slightest bit judgmental about it, I find it fascinating that considerable reputations can be built upon projects that aren't built. And that could certainly be categorized as a form of hype in and of itself. At the end of the day, it's not contributing to the built environment; it's part of the ether. I'm hard-pressed to dredge up any sort of parallel in any other business I've seen. I think that is an aspect of hype that is unique to this sector.

Ted Landsmark: The analogy to the hype that surrounded high tech and the IPOs could prove to be more significant than we realize. We're suffering the consequences of the hype of the high-tech bubble, not just in terms of people who didn't benefit from the hype, but also in terms of people whose pension and retirement plans have disappeared. My concern is that at some point the public is going to ask for a level of accountability in this field, just as they have in the corporate and financial world. Standards will be applied to what it is we said we're capable of doing and what we've in fact delivered in terms of improving the quality of life in this country and elsewhere. And we'll be found wanting.

Nader Tehrani: I think the high-tech IPO markets are not an effective analogy, because in that case people's lives and fortunes were at stake. In architecture schools, we have these little hypes. First there was deconstruction. Then there was folding. Then it was blobs. All of these are intellectual toys and trinkets that the discipline thrives on. They all have positive connotations, not because they're all intrinsically good or useful, but because they are vehicles around which imagination, dialogue, and debate can revolve. Peter Eisenman has built an entire career around that very model. The problem with that is that these movements rarely influence discussions of urbanism, and urbanism is the area that does begin to affect broader environmental questions, from ecology to the public realm. We will always have projects like the Boston City Hall and Bilbao, and they will always insistently look iconically different. But not all of architecture can or should play that role.

Robert Campbell: But they do have a negative impact on the profession. Most people are horrified when they are told that in a 1976 poll of architects, Boston City Hall finished as one of the ten greatest American buildings. That was the last era of great hyped architectural reputations before now. It was a long, slow movement in the 1970s and '80s, and now it's picked up again.

Stephen Lord
Music Director, Conductor
Boston Lyric Opera

Britney Spears
Curse of the Bambino
0% financing

The Storm of The Century
Atkins Diet
Sprint and Verizon Wireless ("Can you hear me now? Good.")

We as a profession have suffered greatly from the perception by the larger culture that we give each other prizes for buildings that nobody else can stand. The worst problem the architectural profession faces is the gap between the subculture of architecture and the larger culture. I think Ted is absolutely right that we will be called to account, and I'll be glad when we are.

Elizabeth Padjen: I'm fascinated by the comparisons that Tom is making between the advertising and marketing industry and architecture. When people come to you to promote a product of some sort, what is the language they use?

Tom Simons: I would imagine that it's different from the language that you use. We talk in terms of making sure that what our client wants to say is what the market needs to hear. We want to make sure that the product or service that is coming to market is brought to the attention of the right segment in a manner that clearly communicates what the benefit is, so that the prospective customers can see themselves in the communication. There is an aesthetic to it, but it is formed, or should be formed, strictly on the basis of ease of communication.

Elizabeth Padjen: A client calls you. What are the phrases you're likely to hear? "Tom, we're launching this widget. We want you to —"

Tom Simons: "Create a campaign across a variety of media that we need to figure out. We have a budget of five million dollars, and we want to sign a contract for a period of time. We need to develop an understanding of our brand and communicate that clearly to our public. We want to establish a dialogue with prospects who over time can be brought into the fold as customers."

Robert Campbell: "And we want to get rich and famous."

Tom Simons: Rich, maybe.

Ted Landsmark: As opposed to famous.

Elizabeth Padjen: Architects go for the fame.

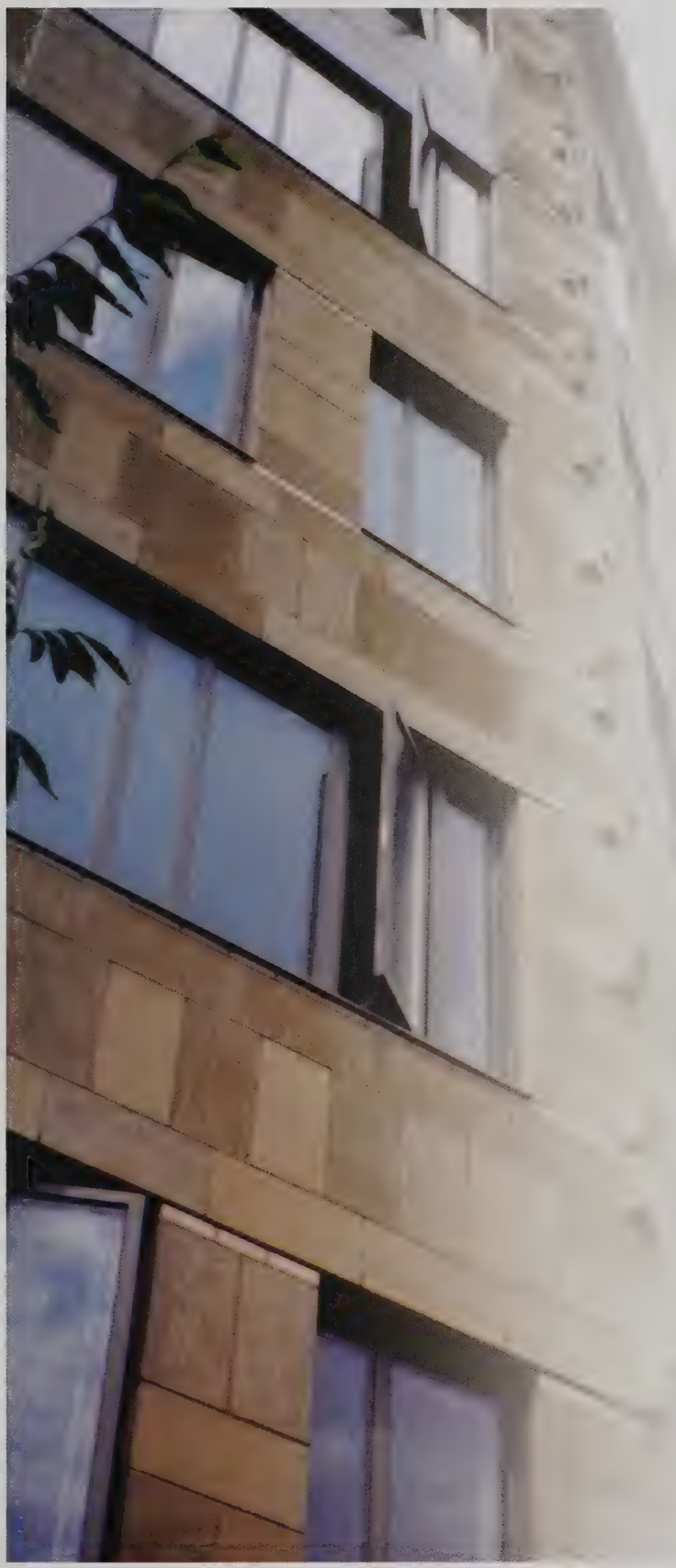
Ted Landsmark: It's not at all clear that much of the hype that goes on within architecture is focused on reaching any particular market segment in a way that will influence anyone to buy the product. If it were, then architects would be putting their hype in *Fortune* magazine, or *Fast Company*, or in other publications where the clients are, rather than putting it into the kind of narcissistic self-serving publications that enable us to give awards to ourselves.

Elizabeth Padjen: That struck me, too, as Tom was speaking: his clients' focus on the audience.

Nader Tehrani: The trouble with the architectural audience is that because architectural knowledge is so specific and so closely held within the discipline, the public rarely engages in it at a broader level. And there is no curriculum in public schools that develops a nuanced understanding of the arts and architecture, particularly in the US. So for architects, it's not only a question of knowing the audience, but also of constructing an audience. We can't do that at, say, the university level alone. You have to grow up with a consciousness of your environment, an understanding of the roles of ecology and urbanism, and an understanding of the role of public life versus private life. We need to get architects to learn how to speak in public, because we sometimes speak languages that are unworthy of public discourse. But we also need to encourage the public to engage in a discussion on architecture, and part of that would entail their education in the arts.

Robert Campbell: That's true. There's very little in American public education that leads you to become an architect, let alone to become part of the audience for architecture. We seem to agree that hype, although it's probably necessary for marketing ourselves, tends to simplify and misrepresent the real work of architects by presenting it as being primarily about fashion and fame and formal invention. But it's hard to present the work of architects as it really is. You have to tell a story, and whatever story you tell is a great simplification. It's very tough to tell the full story. Maybe you have to tell the right story. ■■■

Will Morgan
Architectural historian
Providence, Rhode Island
Thanks, but where would one begin? Harvard?



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The Hype of the New Modernism

by John King

Postmodern Modernism (PoMoMo) is the rage, and it is all about style.

The newest office tower in San Francisco has exposed steel beams and a dark curtain wall. The vertical lines are prim, the horizontal ones demure. The lobby sits behind clear glass walls, a rarified sanctum of wood and stone with a Liechtenstein painting for splash.

Sound familiar? It should. I could be describing any one of dozens of towers built in the United States during the late '50s and early '60s. But this is the modern world, in more ways than one, where everything old is new again and drained of memory along the way. Which means that 33 years after a certain very influential German died, San Francisco now has its first Miesian tower.

Modernism is back with an austere vengeance, and not just in San Francisco. On skylines, in the nooks of vacation homes, in furniture showrooms and Web sites, the movement reaches out more pervasively than it has for decades. But forget the stern old adage Form Follows Function. This is Form Follows Fashion. Call it Postmodern Modernism — PoMoMo for short.

I don't mean to say there aren't architects and designers still faithful to the cause, serious to the principles established by the holy trinity of Mies, Gropius, and Le Corbusier. But PoMoMo is the rage, and it is all about style. Branding. Think of brushed steel as shorthand for urbane sophistication, an Eames plywood chair as a stylish way to show you aren't hung up on style. The gestures are as codified and predictable as what you see at the home of that friend with a fetish for Victoriana, or the bungalow bourgeois who fantasize about owning a Stickley chair all their own.

Indeed, 21st-century Modernism seems to be an excuse to accessorize as much as anything else; after all, that PoMoMo loft in Fort Point Channel can't be furnished with those bargains you nabbed at a tag sale. Evidence? Flip through a catalogue of Design Within Reach, a San Francisco-based furniture dealer. Founder Rob Forbes has linked his store to the Bauhaus creed "to elevate the interest in legitimate design"; a recent catalogue cover proclaims "Break Old Patterns with Award-Winning Modern Design."

Here's how you "break old patterns": with a chaise longue by Le Corbusier (introduced in 1928; now $1,200), or Mies' chair for his Barcelona Pavilion (introduced in 1929; now $1,900), or an Isamu Noguchi glass table (introduced in 1942; now $999). (Speaking of which, white-leather Barcelona chairs beckon coolly in the lobby of the New York office of Skidmore Owings Merrill — no doubt to assure visitors that the firm has shaken its 1980s infatuation with Postmodernism.)

For PoMoMos still counting their pennies, there's also a full line of geegaws designed by George Nelson, inventor of the modular storage system and, the DWR Web site assures us, "one of the most original American modernists." Several snazzy clocks are available for $250, all "diligently reproduced to the last detail of the original piece." My favorite is the acrylic Blue Star model ("a charming example of the optimism of post-war American modernists"), but they'd all look at home in a *Life* magazine photo spread circa 1953. Now, of course, they're wryly ironic. And of course — *of course* — the effect is wholly different from those Colonial Williamsburg reproductions that are beneath intellectual contempt.

But enough of old Modern. Back to the Postmodern variety.

San Francisco's new tower is by Cesar Pelli, who excels at two things: efficiently wrapping skins around large amounts of vertical space, and staying abreast of cultural trends. After debuting in the glassy Modernist camp, Pelli moved suavely into Postmodernism in the 1980s — low-key rather than high camp. A decade ago he was taking the brick ornamentation of Carnegie Hall and extending it upward another 60 stories. In Chicago, his undeniably handsome 181 West Madison tower is so reminiscent of Eliel Saarinen's design for the Chicago Tribune tower competition that — well, let's just say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Now, catching the PoMoMo breeze, Pelli has parachuted a little bit of Sixth Avenue into Baghdad-by-the-Bay. To some people it probably looks like a Brobdingnagian file cabinet, or the packing crate for other more overtly historic towers that have popped up nearby. But to several architects I know and respect, it's a breath of disciplined style.

And what does "disciplined" mean? Maybe that it doesn't wear a dunce cap and it isn't clad in paper-thin granite, the twin emblems of too many San Francisco high-rises. More to the point, it would fit seamlessly into the skylines of any of the cities that are regular stopping points for the frequent-flyer crowd.

In fact, just as the old Modernism proclaimed itself to be International Style, PoMoMo is Globalism personified. It's the ideal backdrop for the folks who can afford to stay at the Ritz-Carlton in the Boston Millennium project, which doesn't look all that different from the Four Seasons by Millennium in San Francisco, which is echoed in the brickwork of Millennium's towers near Lincoln Center. Another is set to rise in Miami. And they all look — I quote the press agent for a Millennium project in Washington, DC — "strikingly modern."

What do old-school Modernists think of all this? Guess.

"If it's simply a replication of something that's been done, that's totally uninteresting," says Stanley Saitowitz, the San Francisco-based designer of, among other striking contemporary projects, the New England Holocaust Memorial in Boston. "They're not answering today's questions."

That, to Saitowitz, is what makes architecture important: the task of wrestling with such current issues as sustainability, the production of affordable housing, and intelligent approaches to neighborhood revitalization. If the work done by "contemporary" Modernists has visual ties to the past — Saitowitz has a huge loft project in San Francisco with poured concrete walls that are positively Corbusien — it also shows a restless exploration of materials and new technologies.

"What we do is rooted in the modern way of thinking — you don't start with a solution but with a process," argues Saitowitz. "The style stuff gets in the way."

PoMoMo has its virtues; it adds a certain astringent panache to the scene. Pelli's San Francisco tower, for instance, is derivative but undeniably sharp. It certainly trumps Robert A.M. Stern's headquarters for the Gap six blocks east on the bay. Unlike Boston's retro-but-elegant 222 Berkeley Street tower by Stern, the Gap is a leaden and too-literal cross between the Ferry Building and nearby warehouses.

Still, Saitowitz is right. PoMoMo is neither a moral creed nor a mark of bohemian breeding. Mimickry of 1920s Modernism may *look* different from mimickry of 1820s Federal style, but it's still mimickry.

Like all movements, Modernism has sacred texts. One is *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition*, by Sigfried Giedion — acclaimed by no less than Walter Gropius as "the standard work on the development of Modern architecture." Way back in 1938, Giedion warned that "Modern architecture is something more than a universally applicable means of decoration.... The moment we fence architecture within a notion of 'style,' we open the door to a formalistic approach." And $1,900 knockoffs of 73-year-old chairs. ■■■

John King lives in a 1925 bungalow with so-so detailing and no Stickley chair in Berkeley, California. He is the *San Francisco Chronicle*'s urban design writer.

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Architects, Politics, and the Art of the Hype:

Why architects need *more* hype

by George Bachrach

When it comes to politics, architects are really "good guys." And you know where good guys finish.

Architects, almost by definition, are thoughtful, refined, artistic, and aesthetic. Unfortunately, politics is not. As they say, the two things you really do not want to watch being made are sausages…and laws.

The reality is that architects, and their professional associations, have a great deal to offer the political world. Architects are perceived by many politicians to be valuable, non-partisan contributors to sound public planning and design. Architects have the background, training, and civic spirit to add important information to the debate about public spaces, affordable housing, better-built schools, "green" buildings, and smart growth, among other issues. And all of these issues are rising higher on the public agenda.

So if architects are so smart…why ain't they politically rich? The answer is that architects are often too self-effacing. They choose not to be intrusive…self-promoting…*political.* They believe that truth and substance and creativity will be judged on the merits. Ah, such wonderful pipedreams. Unfortunately, on planet Earth, political success comes to those who offer not only substance, but who are connected and shamelessly unabashed.

The good news is that architects, the American Institute of Architects, and some of its state chapters, have started to "get it." Over the last several years, enlightened leaders of the profession have determined that architects not only have something to add to the public debate but also need to preserve professional standards and protect the profession from encroachment. These architects realize they now need to move the agenda more forcefully, even if "shamelessly" still seems to be a bit of a reach.

To that end, the AIA and some of its chapters have hired lobbyists and PR advisors. And architects have developed political alliances with engineers, urban planners, contractors, landscape architects, other design professionals, and even with organized labor.

Most importantly, architects have begun networking with powerful political figures and key members of the media. Architects have developed databases to mobilize their grassroot and

professional allies to affect government action from Capitol Hill to state houses to city halls. Architects have elevated their visibility by sponsoring political debates, organizing charrettes, hosting political fundraisers, and developing awards programs to publicly recognize and honor those political leaders who are supportive of issues important to the architectural community.

Similarly, architects have grown more sophisticated in developing synergistic relationships with members of the media. Architect-sponsored forums and political debates have included key reporters and editors on panels. On major public projects, architects have become an indispensable resource for writers trying to understand and write about urban planning. For example, on Boston's historic $14-billion "Big Dig" project, the largest in US history (depressing a major transportation artery underground and redesigning the precious 30 acres of urban public space above), the Boston Society of Architects (BSA), has played an important resource role, privately briefing the media on what constitutes good planning and design. Publicly the BSA has also partnered with the media and others, producing forums and even television programs featuring creative alternatives for the future of such grand public space.

The net result has architects not only fulfilling their professional role by providing design options on an important public project, but also cementing their relationship with the media for future projects. Building this foundation, both with public officials and with the media, ensures that architects will be heard on important issues in the years ahead. Whether the issues are federal, state, or local; legislative or regulatory; public or private, architects are putting the pieces together that will ensure they have a seat at the government/media decision-making table.

This all the more critical because architects can make important contributions to the public debate on a broad array of issues. Architects should not be shy when it comes to the need for affordable housing, "green" buildings, well-designed schools, and secure buildings in an age of terrorism. Architects must be clear and consistent in their advocacy, unafraid to let government and the media know what makes sense.

The simple point is that architects in the future can be much stronger players in the public debate than they have been in the past. But it will not happen just because architects are smart, honest, and professional. It cannot be done with subtlety, anonymity, or false modesty. As William Bulger, president of the University of Massachusetts and the longtime former president of the Massachusetts state senate, once described the business of politics and politicians: "We're as subtle as a train wreck!"

Architects need to fully understand Bulger's simple point. Good substance is merely the starting point in the political process. Architects need to understand the art of the hype. If you believe in your position, if you think you can offer substantive and creative solutions, then you need to speak up — loudly and clearly and often. You need to mobilize your members and allies, in and out of government. You need to call your friends in the media and push the message. And you should not presume that merely because you've said it once, anyone's actually heard it. The rule of thumb in advertising, and politics, is that the audience needs to hear the same message over and over before they'll buy.

Finally, it must be understood that no one vehicle can deliver the message; effective delivery requires multiple levels of communication that demand everyone's participation. Architects need professional counsel on public relations and lobbying. But this effort alone would fail without architects' grassroots activism, expanding alliances, networking with political leaders, and cultivation of the media. Architects must continue to host forums and debates, write newspaper columns, lobby government, and sponsor fundraisers. Each piece builds upon the last. Everyone has a role.

If architects want their message to be heard, and if they want to preserve their profession from the encroachment of others, they simply cannot afford to be shy or presume that others will carry the banner for them. Architects must leverage their inherent public value and influence. Architects must play the game, understand the art of the hype, and affect politics and public opinion for both their own professional well-being and for the public good. Architects cannot simply presume that just because they are often right, good, and true, they will win.

Because you know where good guys finish. Architects can do better. ■■■

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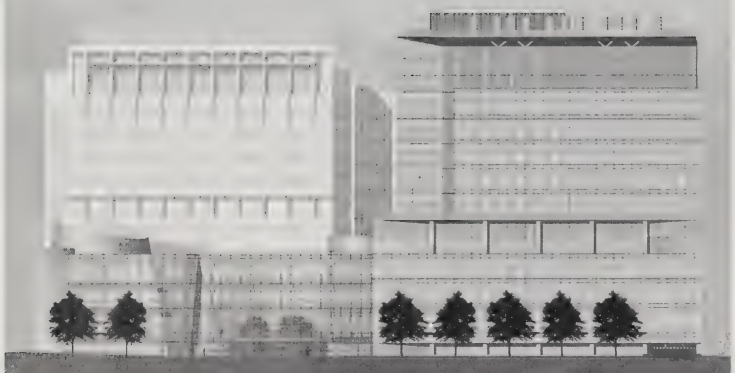

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Spin Cycle:

Architecture and the construction of hype

by Deborah K. Dietsch

The excessive, misleading promotion known as "hype" is more often associated with Madison Avenue suites than drafting rooms. But the world of architecture is hardly immune from using aggressive marketing techniques and gimmicks to push ideas into the professional and public consciousness.

Starting with treatises and pattern books, architects have long promoted their ideas — and reputations — through media other than buildings. Ancient Roman architect Vitruvius wrote about architecture as combining structure, utility, and beauty, a concept that was resuscitated by Renaissance architect Leon Battista Alberti in his 15th-century texts. In 1642, British writer Henry Wotton embraced the Vitruvian ideal again in an essay promoting "firmness, commodity, and delight."

Architectural drawings accompanied treatises to support classical principles and provide visual guidelines for other architects. Sebastiano Serlio's 16th-century handbooks, for example, became invaluable to northern European architects who, never having seen Rome, copied them to promote a new classical vision.

Buildings have also long served as a medium to hype a message. During the Counter Reformation in the 17th century, for example, the Catholic Church used the theatrical curves and dramatic lighting effects of Baroque architecture to attract worshippers back into its fold. Early America drew upon the classical architecture of ancient Greece to hype democracy, while Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia later appropriated a more streamlined version to spin their authoritarian regimes.

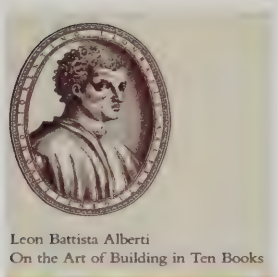
Though Modern architects challenged the classical language, they continued its tradition of promoting new ideology through publications and prototypical buildings. From the manifestos of Futurism and Constructivism to the Wasmuth portfolio of Frank Lloyd Wright, books, magazines, and exhibitions proliferated to argue the avant-garde's case for utopian abstraction.

While pushing a political and social agenda, Modernism splintered architecture into a series of movements that broke with the past to celebrate the new. This focus on novelty coincided with the rise of popular media such as radio and film, and the celebrity culture that accompanied them. By the 1920s, "hype," a shortened version of "hyperbole," had entered the lexicon as well as architecture. Architects began hyping their personalities to draw attention to their individual designs just as Hollywood movie stars did in promoting their films. Modernists even made up new names — Charles-Edouard Jeanneret became Le Corbusier; Ludwig Mies added "van der Rohe" — to create a buzz around their artistic endeavors.

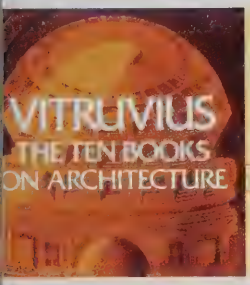
By the mid-20th century, economic forces began to exert yet another influence on the hyping of architecture. Buildings became a commodity used to sell civic and corporate identity. Like three-dimensional advertisements, skyscrapers rose ever higher to trump the competition and change the skyline. After the war, the sheer volume of construction — office towers, housing, schools, hospitals — sealed the fate of buildings as products to be marketed and sold. The majority of architects no longer worked for the aristocracy or a few power brokers, but for commercial enterprises fixated on the bottom line. Modernism went mainstream to hype corporate capitalism and conformity. The once avant-garde International Style became just a style, sapped of its social and political ideals.

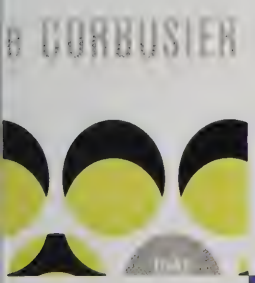
Postmodernism later pushed the packaging of architecture further. Layered with pediments, arches, and colorful swags, buildings of the 1970s and '80s hyped the past through formal gimmicks. Architects promoted their decorated designs as connecting with the public, but few outside the profession understood their pumped-up imagery.

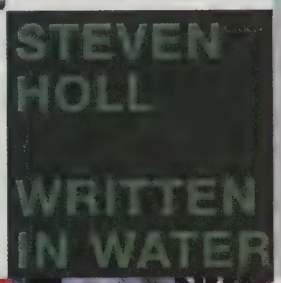
Today, as architects pursue different directions, they are spinning their work faster and more furiously than ever before. Promotion is not only accomplished through books, magazines, and brochures, but also through videos, television, Web sites, and other electronic media that allow architects to broadcast

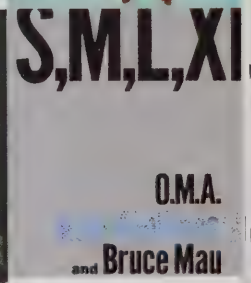


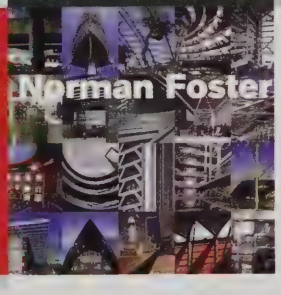
Today, it's the big image rather than the big idea that counts.











their work to more people than ever before. Even the AIA advertises its services on TV.

But is anyone listening?

Sales and marketing pitches have become so commonplace in our ad-saturated culture that we are skeptical of nearly any idea that's presented. The proliferation of sounds and images has inured us to their meaning, as Andy Warhol, in silkscreening photos of electric chairs and car crashes, knew only too well.

The hyping of architecture seems more extreme today, not only because of increased marketing and communications, but also because of the pluralism that dominates the field. High-tech, eco-conscious, minimalist, traditional — there are so many styles and approaches that it's hard to discern their value. We are told that "green" buildings will save the environment; Modernism is cool again; and houses with front porches and rear garages will promote more neighborliness and less driving in the suburbs. It's difficult to believe the often conflicting claims of these mini-movements, given the fact that many of their concepts are recycled from the past — and they didn't necessarily work so well back then.

What makes us even more skeptical of these ideas is that they have been co-opted as marketing tools. Architects hype their LEED-certified designers while developers tout their green and healthy buildings. Retailers and restaurant owners merchandise the Modern look to young consumers discovering it for the first time. Even New Urbanism has trickled down to become an image-conscious veneer for high-priced developments of traditional townhouses.

Architecture may offer more variety than ever before, but much of it lacks the consensus and conviction that have long accompanied the great movements of the past. Today, it's the big image rather than the big idea that counts. It is rare to hear an architect talk about how buildings can connect with people — and even improve lives.

Magazines, books, and exhibitions reinforce the visual hyping by depicting buildings and interiors through pristine photographs absent of people and the clutter of everyday life. The manifesto has been replaced by the monograph, a narrowly focused publication devoted to a single firm. No longer are these books published as academic titles; instead they are paid for and controlled by architectural firms so that the firms can use them as marketing tools to hype their expertise.

These publications, like the treatises and pattern books of yesteryear, promote individual designs that are widely copied in the field. But today it takes months instead of years for fashionable details to catch on. Barrel vaults are hyped one season, only to be replaced in the next season by angular steel canopies, which are then quickly rejected for irregular planes of luminescent glass. Unlike Serlio's copycats, contemporary architects often have a harder time in successfully imitating trends without the benefit of established tradition.

The loss of public stature has led architects to hype their work — even small and unbuilt projects — more than ever before. Fanfare over the Prada boutique by Rem Koolhaas, who promotes his store with a tome on shopping, is quickly upstaged by publicity of Santiago Calatrava's winged Milwaukee Art Museum. This excessive promotion makes us suspicious of the actual building — even when it truly deserves praise. It's easy to forget Frank Gehry's civic achievement in Bilbao when his Guggenheim museum is endlessly repeated as a backdrop for TV car commercials and fashion ads.

Hype isn't always a bad thing, especially when it draws attention to the public benefits of architecture. The Guggenheim's promotion of Gehry's titanium "artichoke" has helped to attract tourists and boost Bilbao's economy, while convincing other cities to invest in high-profile museums and civic monuments. The danger of this attention-getting architecture, however, is a novelty-seeking attitude that puts hype ahead of quality. Clients are often too eager to hire a star architect to repeat an image rather than an idea. How different from the past, when ideas traveled, not the architects.

As all too evident from fantasy-based places like Brasilia and Las Vegas, flashy, image-conscious buildings don't always fit in or wear well. They contradict the very nature of architecture, which is a slow-moving art built to last.

That is why the quick spin on architecture seems so shallow. The best buildings not only dazzle and excite, but also solve functional and structural challenges while promoting the common good. Their successful combination of ingredients, which may take an entire career to figure out, isn't easily conveyed on a Web site or promotional brochure. It's the hype that Vitruvius understood all too well.

■■■

Deborah K. Dietsch is an architectural journalist in Washington, DC. She is the former editor of *Architecture*.

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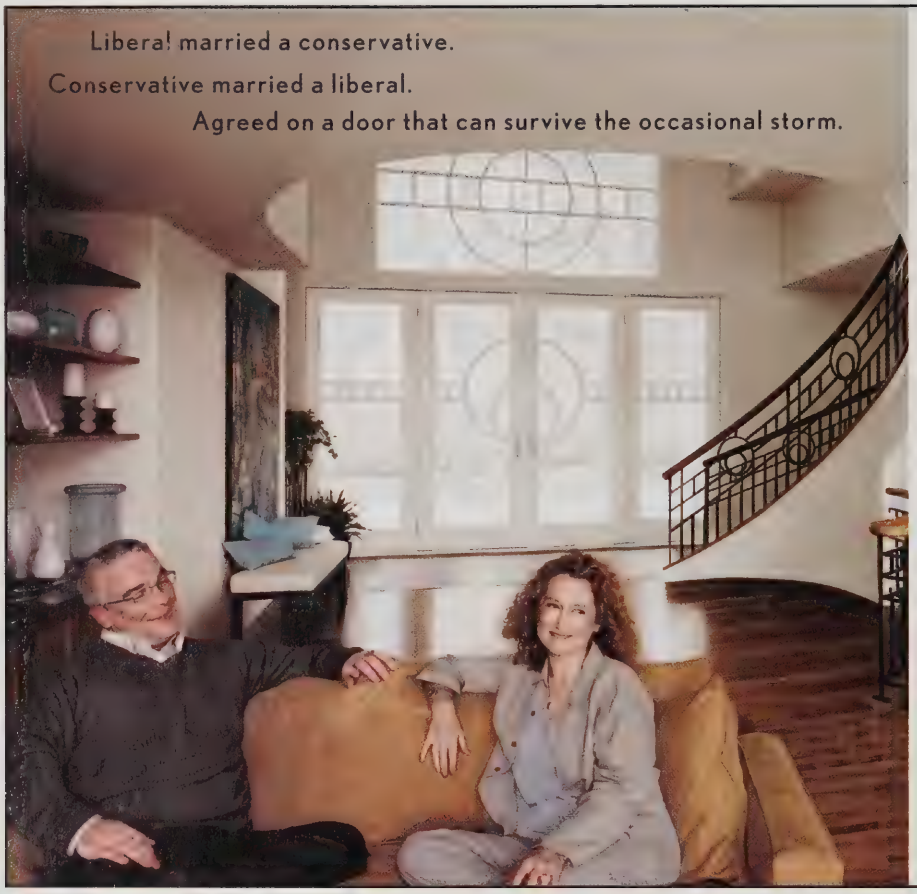

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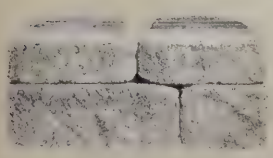

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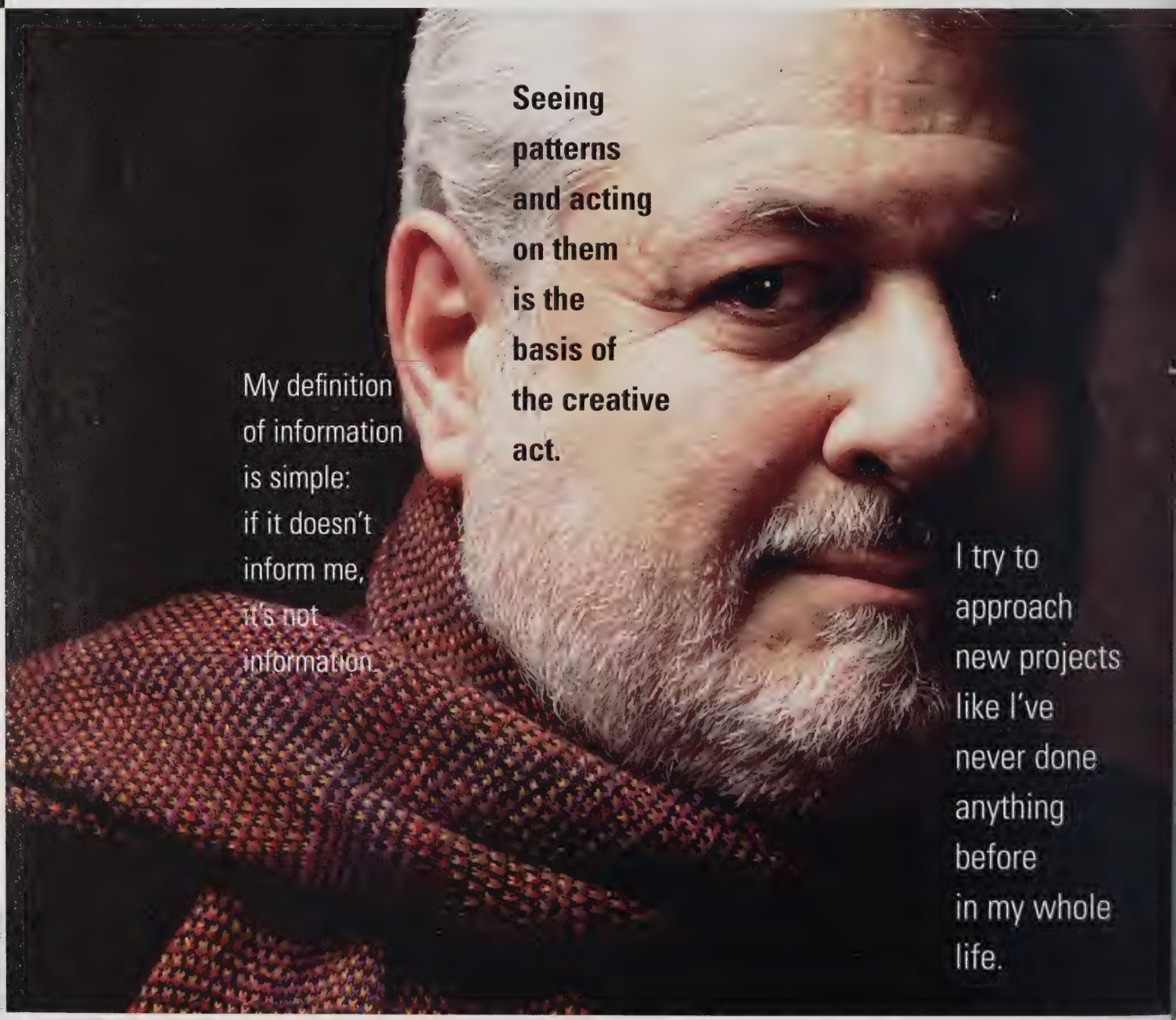
Jeff Stein AIA is the architecture critic for Banker+Tradesman and professor of architecture at Wentworth Institute of Technology. He recently served as commissioner of education for the Boston Society of Architects and is a frequent contributor to *Architecture-Boston.*

Richard Saul Wurman FAIA is the director of TOP (The Ovations Press) and of the TED MED conferences, having founded and directed from 1984-2002 the TED (Technology/Entertainment/Design) conferences now managed by the Sapling Foundation. A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, where he studied under Louis Kahn, Wurman was a principal in an architecture firm, deputy director of housing and community development in Philadelphia, a professor at North Carolina State University, and dean of architecture and urban planning at California State Polytechnic before he wrote, designed, and published *LA Access*, the first in a successful series of guidebooks later sold to HarperCollins.


Seeing patterns and acting on them is the basis of the creative act.
My definition of information is simple: if it doesn't inform me, it's not information.
I try to approach new projects like I've never done anything before in my whole life.

Pattern Language

Richard Saul Wurman FAIA
talks with Jeff Stein AIA

Richard Saul Wurman FAIA abandoned the traditional practice of architecture in 1976. It was apparently the right decision. Having invented the term "information architect," he also invented a career path that led to success with his bestselling *Access* guides, the TED (Technology/Entertainment/Design) conferences, and the 1989 groundbreaking book *Information Anxiety*. Today he lives and works in a 30-room mansion in Newport where he continues to explore the structure of information.

STEIN: You've written 80 books and probably learned a few things about hype along the way. Yet your career generally has been not about hype, but about its opposite: the objective communication of information. "Hype" suggests something which stimulates artificially, a sales gimmick, a publicity stunt, something that's promoted extravagantly. So what is it about your work that is inherently not hype?

WURMAN: My sense is that people think I do hype things. We never know what our reputation is because there are so many filters through which people see you, and only certain people will tell you how they feel about you. Lou Kahn and I once had a very long conversation on a six-hour flight from Philadelphia to San Francisco. I told him about a book project I had started, a kind of Rashomon of Lou Kahn, for which I was asking many people who were his clients, his students, friends, relatives, what they thought of Lou. And I said that I already knew that some of what they were going to tell me wouldn't be very positive. But I wanted him to know that I was doing this and I wanted him to know how much I loved him. And he paused for a while, and he said, "That's OK, Ricky. I'd be very interested. Everything and anything that everybody says is the truth. It's *their* truth. It might not always be factual, but in that it is their truth in that moment, it's interesting."

STEIN: You were trained initially as an architect.

WURMAN: I still am an architect.

STEIN: And yet you are an architect of a different sort now.

WURMAN: Well, I designed my pool. I laid out every stone. I developed all the gardens. I designed

all the planting. I designed my kitchen and the furniture in my house. I'm still an architect. I think like an architect. As Lou Kahn said, I get a haircut as an architect. I cut my own hair, by the way. I'm very much an architect — it's absolutely part of everything I do. That's why I call what I do "information architecture," because it's information with the systemic teachings of Lou Kahn, a way of explaining things, pieces of information, as thought patterns serving each other. That's the way I look at information.

STEIN: Identifying patterns seems to be a key to your work. Can you discern a pattern in the *way* that you work — in planning your books and conferences?

WURMAN: I try to approach new projects like I've never done anything before in my whole life. And that terror, combined with my confidence, is the excitement of beginnings. A conference takes me a year and a half to do. They run every two years. So I'm six months into the next one when I do the one before. When a project is over, I go on to the next thing. I let my books go out of print. You don't live long enough to do otherwise.

STEIN: So you take advantage of opportunities.

WURMAN: I *make* opportunities. Nobody ever asked me to do anything. My curse is that I'm not asked to do anything. My fantasy is — I would love that phone to ring and have somebody say, "We would love you to do so and so. Would you do that?" And I would say, "Wow, that's really interesting. Yeah." But that doesn't happen. Ever.

STEIN: So you make these things happen. How? Where does the next idea come from?

WURMAN: Everything I do is generic. The books on understanding children, understanding healthcare. The guides to Paris, London, Rome. I mean, there's nothing esoteric about anything I do.

STEIN: You once quoted Ludwig Wittgenstein and said the key to learning is remembering what you're interested in. Through interest comes understanding. You appear to be naturally interested in a whole lot of stuff. And it seems that if it interests you, it interests others. You manage to present it as information, rather than raw data.

WURMAN: That's the only way I can understand it. I believe I am hypernormal — I am more normal than you, and therefore I understand normalcy better than you understand normalcy. And what is interesting and curious to me is interesting and curious to others, because I'm one of them.

STEIN: You've led an active life starting as an architecture student, and an architect, and an academic professor, a dean of a school of architecture —

WURMAN: Fired from those.

STEIN: A planner, a book publisher, an event maker.

WURMAN: I don't think of those as being different things. To me they're all the same. There's a story that's probably apocryphal about Mies van der Rohe late in his life sitting in a big armchair with a cigar in his mouth talking to a student working on an architecture magazine. And this young student kept on saying, "Can you give us advice, what is your secret, what is life —" blah, blah, all that stuff. Finally van der Rohe got semi-exasperated and he said, "OK, I'll tell you." And he looked the young man in the eye, and he said, "Do good work." That was his message. I don't like Mies' work particularly, but I'm glad he did it. I think that his advice was a really wonderful thought in the most profound sense. It's the most powerful thought I have when I begin something: Will this be good?

STEIN: One architect, a friend of mine from Boston, went to one of your conferences, came back, and quit being an architect. He started an entirely new career as a result of that experience.[*see sidebar, facing page*]

WURMAN: Well it changes your life because you see patterns. The creative act is an act of a person who sees patterns that you don't ordinarily see. Patterns that connect things, relationships, and the non-relationships between things. Seeing patterns and acting on them is the basis of the creative act. What is really great design? The opposite of expectation. It's the radical alternative.

STEIN: To some degree that describes your own career — the opposite of expectation. You started in architecture and ended up in the understanding business.

WURMAN: I actually had a company that was called The Understanding Business, which was sold so I can't use the term any more. It was called TUB, which had three meanings. TUB, The Understanding Business. TUB, the bathtub that Archimedes was in when he said, "Eureka, I understand!" And TUB, my body shape. But yes, I'm in the understanding business.

STEIN: It seems that we live in a time when understanding is becoming more difficult for a variety of reasons. We've been talking about the prevalence of hype, for example, which is a means of masking understanding.

WURMAN: Sure. One reason is that people don't understand understanding. And two, if you are into conspiracy theory, you realize you lose control when people understand things. So it's because of both of those things, except I choose not to go down the conspiratorial path.

STEIN: Your TED conferences focus on the intersection of technology, entertainment, and design. How do TEDs promote understanding?

WURMAN: Any project in any of those three categories that is worth its salt has to do also with the other two categories. In '84, when I first came up with this notion of TED, nobody knew what I was talking about. I couldn't get people to come to the first conference. And now it's such an old hat idea — the notion of that kind of convergence — that nobody even knows where it came from. It didn't come from me; it was going to happen anyway. It was simply my observation of what I saw happening.

My definition of information is simple: if it doesn't inform me, it's not information. That is not necessarily the world's definition. As I wrote in *Information Anxiety* 12 years ago, there has not been an information explosion. There's been an explosion of data. The accessibility to data has exploded enormously — the ability to transmit it faster, to reproduce it faster. But our ability to understand it has not necessarily exploded. At the same time, there is more recognition that that's important, and there are more businesses based on that need. When I created the term "information architect" in 1975, there were all kinds of objections; I have correspondence that you wouldn't believe. Now there are probably 100,000 people out there calling themselves information architects.

STEIN: What happened to the dot-com economy? We used to call it the "information economy."

WURMAN: This is not the moment in history to do "I told you so," but there were many of us saying "I told you so" while it was still going on. I participated in a dot-com conference in New York; John Battell from *The Industry Standard* was moderating the panel I was on. I said, "John, you're not going to like to hear this, but when I pick up your magazine and I can't understand what anybody does from an ad, I think there's a serious and endemic problem in this industry." What is that company about? Why would I call them on the phone? You have to have some reason to get in touch with somebody and you didn't for most of them. He did not like to hear that. And they thought it was going to keep on going. It was a frenzy. And then it died.

STEIN: Is there a level at which that might be said of architecture these days? That people don't understand what architects are doing or why?

David Tobias discovered Richard Wurman's TED conferences at a critical point in his transition from architecture (he was the director of education at the Boston Architectural Center, the president of AIA Massachusetts, and the principal of a firm) to a new career as a financial consultant in Boston. Here is his report:

My interest in finding ways to get paid for what I really like to do besides architecture — exploring the connections and convergences of life's fragmented ideas — led me to attend TED5 in 1994.

My first choice for a new career had been to host a WGBH series explaining and simplifying some of the amazing ideas and innovations that permeate our lives. "Get in line" was their response. In late 1993, I stumbled onto this secretive cabal — the TED conferences. The exclusivity and list of attendees, like any club membership, had its own cachet. The fact that Richard Wurman and I had many overlapping interests and experiences probably helped my case for getting in. But in terms of finding a dream career, he really beat me to the punch: We paid him thousands of dollars to see his real talent, his indulgent pleasure in combining his interests and the interests of our time. He is an anamorphoscope in real time.

My current career as a financial consultant allows me not only to explore the convergence of technology, entertainment, and design, but also to profit — one hopes! — from my research. Information is complex and chaotic, but the understanding of the relationships and the search for unity in what seems unlikely places underpins all that I do. Collecting data, finding order, creating a concept. TED was a great place to see it in practice.

Whoever said that influence can't be willed has not met Richard Saul Wurman. And everyone who attends a TED conference will testify that despite his obsessive and subversive edge, we all need a Ricky Wurman character in our lives. Copernican by nature, those around him are whirled together, disorder into order — his order. But it's a pretty nifty ride. He tends to prove it to you by exhaustion.

WURMAN: One of the reasons I left architecture was that it was quite apparent in 1975 — from the clients that we talked to, from the magazines and the newspapers — that the ideal architect was Mr. Graves. That what he was doing with shallow, painted-on decoration of very bad buildings with no plans was what the clients wanted. That's what the magazines hyped. His face was on the cover of the *New York Times Sunday Magazine*. He was the hero. The architect as painter, the architect as would-be Corbusier. The timeliness of architecture rather than the timelessness. The same way that later on David Carson hit the spotlight as a graphic designer. Graphic designer as arrogant non-communicator.

STEIN: What makes Frank Gehry different?

WURMAN: Frank still tries to make space. Does he get carried away with what he's doing? Yeah, probably. But he's making space and place. On the other hand, we have architects like Richard Meier — architecture as a Strathmore model. You couldn't have made, I believe, worse decisions with a group of buildings than Meier did with the Getty Center. You have a public museum in a climate that is mostly very hot and sometimes pouring rain, and no way of walking from building to building, no way of getting out of the sun. The galleries are nothing but chopped up spaces within expensive stonework that is glued on. It's a building of glue.

STEIN: You've had the gift, it seems, of being able to identify emerging trends — and then to act on them. So what are you doing next?

WURMAN: I'm working on a new conference, which will be held in Providence in June. It's a TED MED — about defining and understanding healthcare. I'm passionate about that, and it's where the economy is. One of the metaphors for this conference has to do with my car. When I get in the front seat, I can see how fast I'm going in kilometers and in miles and how fast the engine is going in RPMs, how the electrical system is working, the temperature of the engine, the oil pressure, the pressure in my tires, whether the air is recirculating or fresh. I have lumbar support. I can tell if the trunk is open, the doors are open. I can go to the glove compartment and see the plan for the 20,000, the 30,000, and the 50,000-mile checkup. There's lots that I know from sitting in the front seat of that car. Why do I know more about my car than my body? Why don't I have a human dashboard? I don't know in any regular way my electrical system, my nervous system, how much food is in my stomach. Somebody said to me the other day, "I know when I'm hungry. I don't need to be told that." No? One of the greatest causes of obesity is the fact that your hunger system and your hunger impulses are all screwed up. This is all a huge black hole in the American business scene. There are three parts of the healthcare system: understanding yourself, understanding the people who can help you, and understanding how to regulate and relegate the costs. We don't understand any of them. We have to educate people about how to react to the information they are given. That's not part of our culture — how to handle information, how to ask questions, how to distrust the information, how to double-check it, blind test it, and blind check it.

STEIN: That's your agenda for June. Then what?

WURMAN: Just get through that. I'd like to do three of those meetings. Then I don't think I'll do any more.

STEIN: No?

WURMAN: Heck, no. I can give up things easily.

STEIN: Yes, I've noticed.

WURMAN: Because I don't have any longing to keep on doing guidebooks or these books or conferences. When it's over, it's over.

STEIN: You once described a two-year, six-year, twelve-year pattern that you had earlier in your career.

WURMAN: I did that at eighteen. I did a series of six-year and twelve-year predictions for my life.

STEIN: Do you still do anything like that?

WURMAN: No. I'm doing a three-year plan till I hit 70, but not the way I used to. I used to be very rigorous about it. I needed it, because I feel that I'm inherently so lazy, that unless I have these artificial things as personal goals I don't do anything.

STEIN: So you have a decade of your 70s to look forward to.

WURMAN: Yeah. 'Til the body goes. But the next three years are kind of — well, all years are interesting, but I'm not overloading my system with lots of things. I'm doing basically a book and a conference. I don't think there's anything else on my plate yet. ■■■

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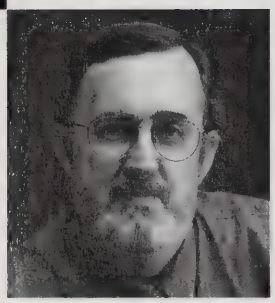
Two Views:

Certification of architectural specialties is the profession's latest cause célèbre. The question: Is it hype or helpful?

by Charles Redmon FAIA



Charles Redmon FAIA is a principal of Cambridge Seven Associates, Inc. in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

A flier describing the American College of Healthcare Architects (ACHA) came across my desk recently; it asked potential healthcare clients if the architects they were employing were certified in healthcare design. I found this very confusing and quite alarming. I didn't think that architects needed to be certified in specialty areas.

Too often, cookie-cutter design solutions are churned out by architects blinded by their own specialty. This point became obvious to me, when I recently participated on an awards jury for healthcare facilities. Most projects submitted were very ordinary; few contributed something extra to the patient, family, or staff experience, to the site, or to the communities they served. My colleagues with extensive healthcare experience seemed to focus more on issues related to accommodating expansion, staffing requirements, and internal building zoning. Issues such as urban design, building massing, pedestrian access, wayfinding, human experience, design quality, building technology, and energy innovation took a second chair to medical care operations. Perhaps more collaboration between healthcare specialists and non-specialists is in order.

Many architects develop a passion for a specific area of practice. Many of them have produced innovative design solutions, contributing to the advancement of practice and serving their clients with distinction. But insight into innovative design is not limited to the architect; it can come from any team member — including the client. There's nothing wrong with architects pursuing their passions. But there is something wrong with splinter groups staking out turf within our profession.

Specialized certification will have a serious negative effect upon the profession. Architecture is one of the few professions in which a generalist is sometimes better equipped than a specialist. The reason is clear: many architectural "problems" require invention and fresh thinking. This approach to design, an iterative synthesis, is the real strength of our profession. Specialized certification would undermine our rich tradition of an inclusive approach to design and would begin to fracture the profession into splintered, exclusive groups. Imagine certifying architects for office building design, housing, prisons, or museums. Who would be the certifying authority? What standards and oversights would be employed? How often would it be done? This would stifle innovative thinking across building types, and would probably send clients false messages and expectations.

The irony of certification in healthcare architecture is that medicine itself offers the clearest argument against certification. When I'm feeling bad I want to talk to a doctor who looks at me as a whole person — physically, mentally, and emotionally. Doctors who see me in this way give me comfort in the fact that they are considering all facets of my being. If they need specialty input, they suggest further consultation with a cardiologist, a surgeon, or a dermatologist, depending upon the particular situation. If I go first to a surgeon, I will probably have surgery; other aspects of my malady might be missed. A generalist will put the specifics in perspective. I believe the same is true for the design profession; it takes a generalist to balance appropriate responses to a particular design problem. Much like holistic medicine, a holistic approach to design usually produces better results.

Every field of endeavor is constantly changing; ours is no exception. Ever-shifting technologies, regulations, and economic and social conditions require us to continually expand our knowledge and expertise — a process that itself leads to innovation. Fresh thinking is often inspired by exposure to new ideas and crossing between disciplines. We are bound by professional ethics not to perform work for which we are unqualified, but architects throughout history have embarked on new project types by hiring people with expertise, forming creative collaborations, and working with innovative clients. An ever-expanding profession, made up of passionate practitioners pursuing diverse careers and collaborating in an ever-smarter marketplace is far healthier than an increasingly narrow profession of isolated specialists. ■■■

Specialty Certification

by Joan L. Saba AIA, FACHA

As a member of the AIA Academy of Architecture for Health, and a practicing healthcare architect, I believe that certification is an appropriate — and increasingly important — way to promote a high level of competency in the rigors of healthcare architectural design. I believe that the design of healthcare facilities requires a specific level of planning, programming, design, documentation, construction and post-construction services that requires knowledge and experience beyond the expertise represented by licensure.

In all design professions, there is an exciting range of what is acceptable in the interpretation of design. In healthcare architecture, too, there should be no attempt to stifle creativity and innovation. But in the rapidly changing field of healthcare, there are precise, complex design and application requirements that must be understood in order to provide clients with the most effective, efficient, high-quality solution.

As healthcare architects, we know that the healthcare industry is experiencing record breakthroughs in clinical treatments and practice, emerging and changing medical technologies, and stringent requirements and review by regulatory agencies. A growing number of healthcare architects has come to believe that expertise in this field is most successfully tested and recognized by the rigorous demands of certification. We feel that it is important to set a standard that is acknowledged and attainable by any qualified healthcare architect who seeks to become certified. The requirement and certification process must be rigorous, defensible, and professionally sound — devised and administered by practicing healthcare architects who have years of experience serving healthcare clients.

Certification is a process that confirms that an individual has met a specific standard within a given field. In the case of healthcare architecture, the certification process provides public verification that an architect has successfully completed an approved educational program and a peer evaluation of experience that assesses knowledge and skills requisite to the most sophisticated practice of healthcare architecture. Such verification is especially valuable to our clients, who are very interested in information that helps them to make decisions regarding the design expertise that is available to them.

The American College of Healthcare Architects (ACHA) was created to improve the quality of healthcare architecture by offering Board Certification in the specialized field of healthcare architecture. A mission of ACHA is to provide the means and methods to enable architects to become certified in the design of healthcare facilities. ACHA's goal is to provide the healthcare community with as many qualified healthcare architects as possible, thereby promoting and facilitating the highest quality healthcare design.

Joan L. Saba AIA, FACHA is a principal of The SLAM Collaborative in Glastonbury, Connecticut. She is president of the AIA Academy of Architecture for Health and a regent of the American College of Healthcare Architects.

Until recently, our profession has chosen not to pursue acknowledging healthcare expertise in the form of certification, although there has been spirited discussion regarding its pros and cons. In general, it has been the role of the AIA Academy of Architecture for Health to provide resources and services for all architects, including architectural students, by fostering research, educational programs, and collegiality among peers. Education is an essential part of ACHA's certification process. ACHA is dedicated to an accessible educational program for new applicants, as well as a mechanism for continuing education, which is absolutely critical in such a dynamic and demanding field as healthcare design.

Certification can be controversial if it is perceived to be exclusionary. However, the intent of ACHA certification is not to exclude but to encourage all those who practice in the area of healthcare architecture, as well as newly trained architects, to become actively committed to the highest level of design expertise, as well as to ongoing professional development and education. ■■■

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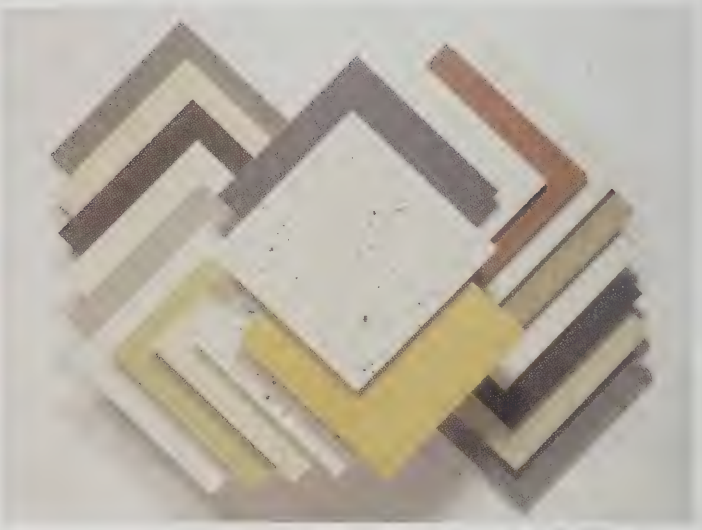

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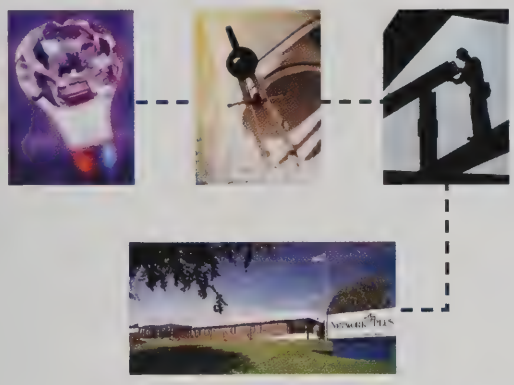

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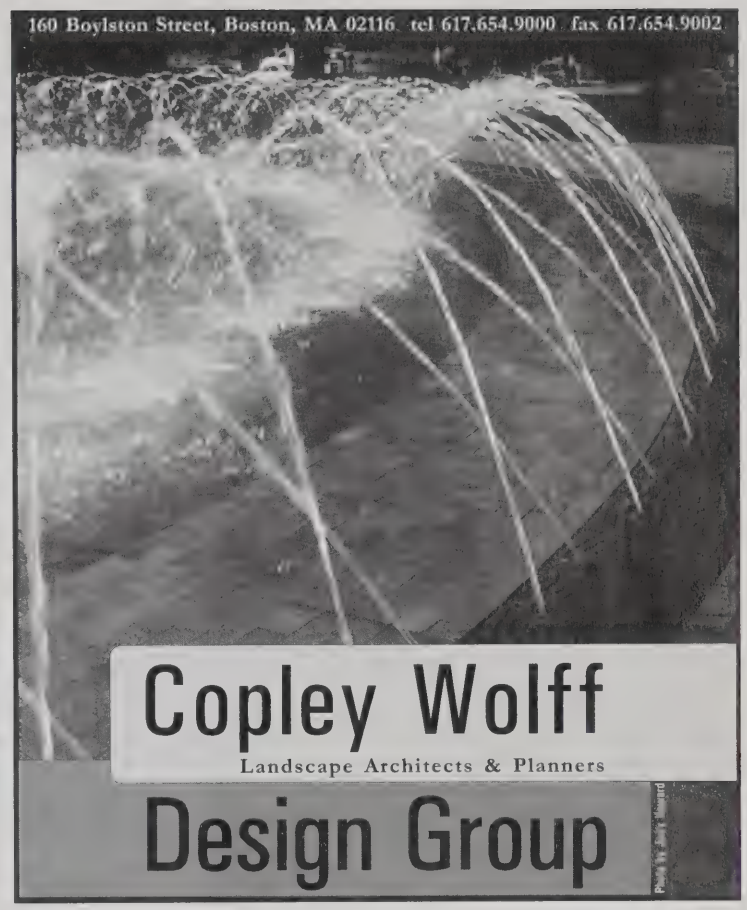

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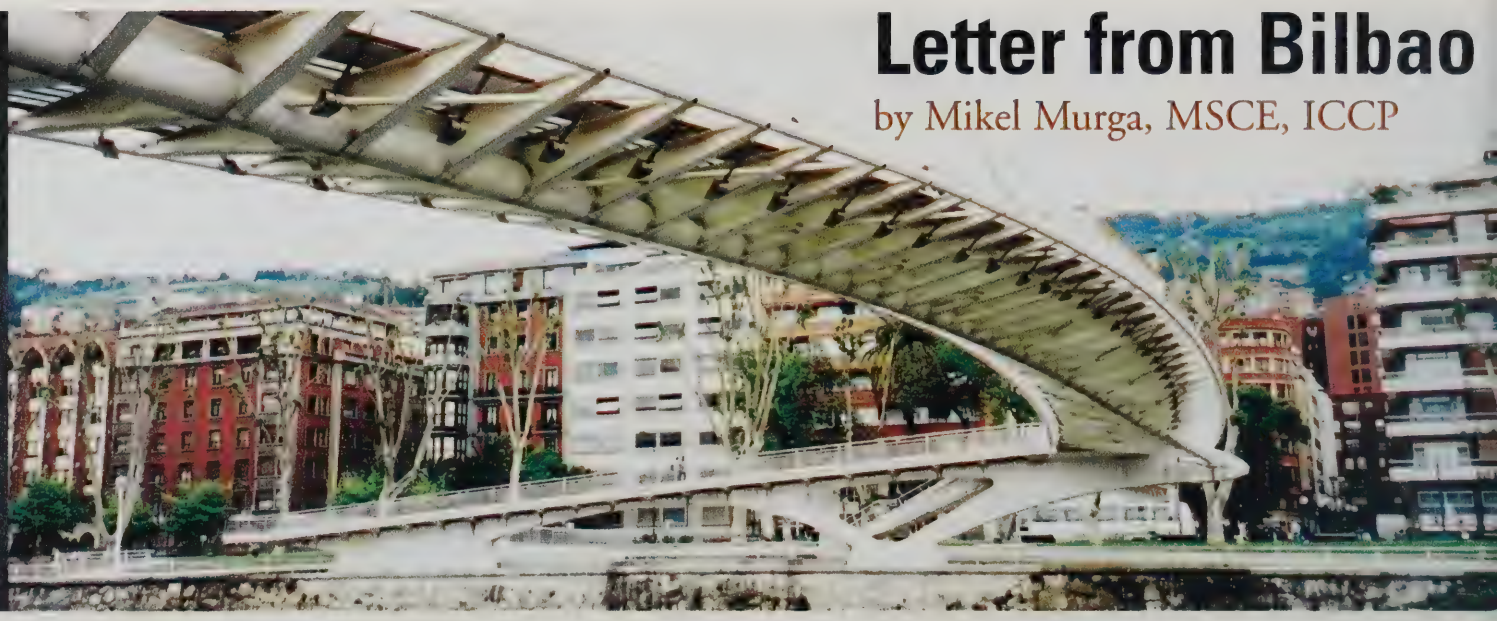

Letter from Bilbao

by Mikel Murga, MSCE, ICCP

At the beginning you could tell by the way the visitors handled their cameras that they had to be architects.

Then as the hype grew about the construction of Frank Gehry's new museum, more and more of them came. I recall getting a call from Denmark one morning: "We are a group of architects from Copenhagen and we would like to know which is the best restaurant in Bilbao." I took the number and promised to return the call in a few minutes. "The consensus in the office is X, Y or Z depending on whether you like the new Basque cuisine or prefer the more traditional one," I reported. "But why do you need to know?" A few months later I would have guessed the answer: "We are taking some of our clients in a private jet by mid-morning to pay an afternoon visit. Dinner has to be the crowning event before we take the plane back."

Gone were the days when my American architect friends marveled at some of the local buildings done by local architects — buildings such as the Concordia Railway Station, the annex of the Deusto Jesuit University, the "miradors" at Jardines de Albia. Back then, they tended to ask what seemed to be a very reasonable question: "Why do you want to compete with Berlin by bringing in Frank Gehry, Norman Foster, Cesar Pelli, Isozaki, Santiago Calatrava…?"

We were surprised that so many visitors showed up and walked around the museum even though at that point the river was not quite clean, the building site was under construction, the container railyard was still operational, and visitors took their lives in their hands to contend with a daunting traffic crossing. Later we watched in disbelief as dignitaries from foreign countries, city mayors from all over, and Hollywood stars dropped by in record numbers. The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao had become not only a new architectural icon, but also a case study on how cities can compete on a wide-world scale to attract new investments.

Frank Gehry, unknown to him, even managed to change the name of the city. For centuries, it had been known in King's English as Bilboa. Shakespeare called any sword-blade of great flexibility a Bilbo, so-named because they were manufactured at…Bilboa. That was the time, too, when ships from Bilboa were supplying the whole of Europe with salted cod-fish, as Mark Kurlansky describes so well in his recent book, *The Basque History of the World.*

The Guggenheim Museum has indeed jump-started a badly needed change for the city following the industrial crisis of the '80s. Throughout most of the 20th century, Bilbao served as one of the economic locomotives of Spain, as it was the birthplace of capitalism, steel mills, shipyards, and chemical complexes, plus a myriad of small firms exporting machine tools to all five continents. The environmental consequences of growth without constraints were evident, especially after the collapse of the industrial economy. No wonder that a few Basque government visionaries were happy to meet most of the demands of Thomas Krens, managing director of the Guggenheim Foundation, when he landed in Bilbao after he heard that the Basques are financially independent, as they collect their own taxes, paying only a yearly quota to the Kingdom of Spain.

The rapidity of change was one of the unintended consequences of Gehry's work. All of a sudden the

good old Museo de Bellas Artes seemed energized by its new neighbor, coming up with new exhibits and seeing its member donations grow. Arts exhibits and galleries mushroomed. Sculptures by Eduardo Chillida and Jorge Oteiza found their place in the city's public spaces. New concert series were announced, the traditional summer theater season was lengthened, and opera attendance skyrocketed. Even the cow exhibit that went from Zürich to New York and Chicago, arrived in Bilbao. From the still tangible iron culture, dating from the Middle Ages, emerged a softer and more intangible era of economic development.

Bilbainos, surprised at the beginning, felt a new surge of optimism. They were happy to tell visitors that they were celebrating their city's 700th anniversary. They were proud to guide them toward the medieval core of the city, now a pedestrian district with a rich mixture of shops, cafés, restaurants, offices, and residences. They were pleased to show off local landmarks, as well as their culinary delicacies.

For the residents of the city, the "Bilbao effect" has led to a new appreciation for architecture and art in general, changing social patterns for both the public at large and elected officials. As a planning professional, I can see changes in the ways transportation and land-use policies interact with each other, shaping the daily lives of residents. The effect is manifested at both small and large scales, from subway riders so proud of Foster's stations that they do not dare to drop a single gum wrapper on the floor, all the way to designers who force themselves to come up with unique bench designs for the growing number of pedestrian streets in the downtown area. Local residents had worried that they were bound to become actors in a city focused on the new visitors; instead, elected officials followed the advice of architect Jan Gehl, author of *Life Between Buildings*, who points out that a city must cater to its residents in order to be attractive to its visitors.

But perhaps the main lessons take root in the long Basque tradition of cooperative enterprises. One clear example is the "Bilbao Ría 2000," a nonprofit public organization, which reconciles the interests of the Spanish Government, the Basque Regional Government, the Provincial Government, the City of Bilbao, and the other towns of Greater Bilbao. The rehabilitation of the riverfront has been possible only with the cooperation of all these entities, often with conflicting agendas, thanks to a constant process of bargaining.

Similarly, another nonprofit public-private entity, "Bilbao Metropoli 30," has found success by pushing beyond the typical Chamber of Commerce path and becoming a sort of public-private think-tank and lobbying group. As a result, it has managed to influence the public agenda, anticipate future projects, and serve as a springboard for new initiatives.

This sense of cooperation and equilibrium is evident in the cityscape in the growing numbers of benches and café seats, of people who walk or choose public transit, of social interactions in the wide sidewalks, and the growing number of car-free zones that are full of activity.

To be sure, Bilbao still has its problems. But the renewed sense of optimism promotes new thinking on issues such as life-cycle housing to avoid the sprawl associated with young couples forced to leave the capital; new technologies to alleviate traffic problems, such as real-time traffic and parking information through cellular-phone messaging systems; and the recognition that improvements in transit can reverse the erosion of public space, enhancing social interaction and integration.

John Adams visited Bilbao and the Basque country some 220 years ago as a case study for the drafting of the US Constitution. Perhaps we can renew that historic link between our cities, which share so many similar issues and challenges: An upcoming exhibition at the Boston Public Library on the Bilbao regeneration process will offer a case study that may help Bostonians grapple with the challenges of the South Boston seaport and the public space over the Central Artery. Bilbainos have learned many lessons: that new added highway capacity unleashes latent demand, that social activities in public spaces help preserve the historic role of cities. But perhaps most important, Gehry's museum has taught us that a major project should not signal the end of a process, but rather a new beginning. ■■■

Mikel Murga, MSCE, ICCP is a part-time research associate and lecturer at MIT's Center for Transportation and Logistics. He also commutes to his transportation planning and traffic engineering office in Bilbao — in spite of his constant use of videoconferencing (or, as he likes to call, it "distance collaboration tools.")

Editor's note: The exhibition "Bilbao: The Transformation of a City" may be seen at the Boston Public Library, Copley Square, from November 25, 2002 to January 10, 2003.

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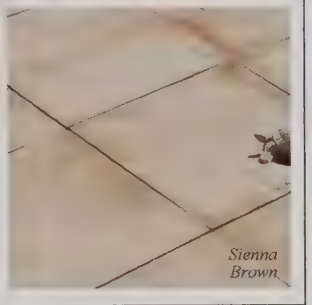
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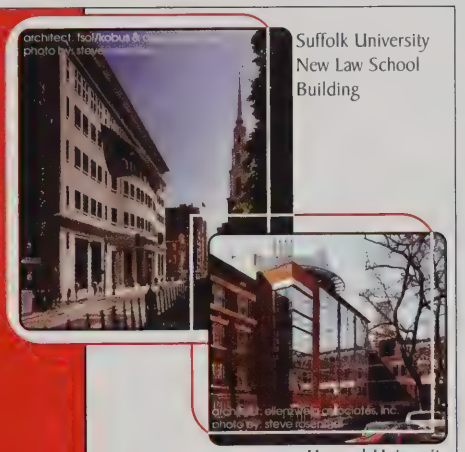

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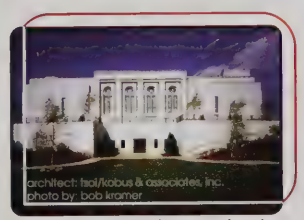

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Covering the Issues
Periodical roundup

by Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA

Today handbags, tomorrow the world... Not too long ago, back in the dark ages, designer logos happily lived on the back pockets of blue jeans or in the form of a little alligator on the chest. Now both Armani and Ralph Lauren have introduced lines of furniture and housewares. Fashion designers are also increasingly pursuing well-hyped collaborations with architects, artists, and designers (Prada/Koolhaas, Gucci/Serra, Issey Miyake/Rashid), as Stefano Tonchi observes in "Total Living" in *Esquire* (September 2002). In this short but smart photo-essay cum cultural commentary cum fashion spread, Tonchi illustrates several different "total lives" that these designers cum architects cum retail giants offer the average Joe consumer. OK — maybe not so average. But the fashion houses seem willing to put their money where their mouth is: September *Men's Journal* "Houses of Style," showcases the latest retail architecture that showcases the fancy clothes. "There is a refined, casual elegance to the environment," writes architect Michael Gabellini on his store design for Salvatore Ferragamo. "We treat [the shop] as theater." It goes without saying that everything featured can be bought.

Still learning from Las Vegas... Would Monet roll in his grave if he knew that his water lilies were on display near a half-size, steel-and-Dryvit copy of the Eiffel Tower? With wit, intelligence, and insight, Eric Gibson defines and comments on "Renaissance, Vegas Style," in August's *Condé Nast Traveler*. The fastest-growing US city — our 20th-century triumph of man over nature — has started to accumulate both history and high-brow culture. Which means that the new Neon Museum and the celebrated Boneyard ("the original dumping ground for the city's burned out [electric signs]") now co-exist with Thomas Krens' latest Guggenheims (yes, two of them!), an Alexander Calder retrospective, and the Auto Collections "exhibit," where you can buy cars once owned by celebrities such as Dolly Parton and Jackie O. "You can inhabit Wayne Newton's world more intimately than any number of impersonators ever will," suggests Gibson. And then view Picasso masterpieces on your way to the one-armed bandit. True life is stranger than fiction.

If I had a million dollars... Those who build companies also build buildings, sometimes with their very own hands. John Grossman highlights four such projects in "Edifice Complex" in July's *Inc* magazine, suggesting that it's a way to let the creative juices flow. As companies grow, founding entrepreneurs must delegate, explains Grossman, "typically losing control of the creative process. Homebuilding is a kind of ballet, getting creative forces to work in sync together." In other words, it's much like starting a business again. Featured projects include a renovated '50s-Modern motel in the Hamptons (always a guest room!); a New Hampshire grand mountain hotel-turned-summer compound; a 1918 turbine hall-turned-software company on the Delaware River near Philadelphia; and a Laguna Beach Gaudi-meets-Arcosanti build-on-a-rock-with-your-hands sort of thing. Get your toe shoes and tutus out.

I picked up the July/August *Atlantic Monthly* despite its cover, which headlined a three-part series called, "American Ground: Unbuilding the World Trade Center." I had thought there'd been enough written already, but fortunately, I read it anyway. With a fascination for the details of construction and process, and an eye for their larger implications, William Langewiesche writes an unsentimental account of "the Pile." The only journalist granted "embedded" access to the Trade Center cleanup, he lived at the site from September to June, with the search and rescue crews, the cleanup and construction workers, engineers, architects, city managers, politicians, survivors, families, visitors. Langewiesche saw it all; he was immersed in the physical, emotional, intellectual, and visceral experience of being there as no one else was or will ever be. This is "the longest piece of original reporting ever undertaken by *The Atlantic Monthly*." Find it, save it, and read it in ten years. Though difficult to appreciate now in the midst of anniversary hype, this account will be one of the primary records of this time. ■■■

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, teaches the architecture studios at Smith College and maintains a practice in Boston.

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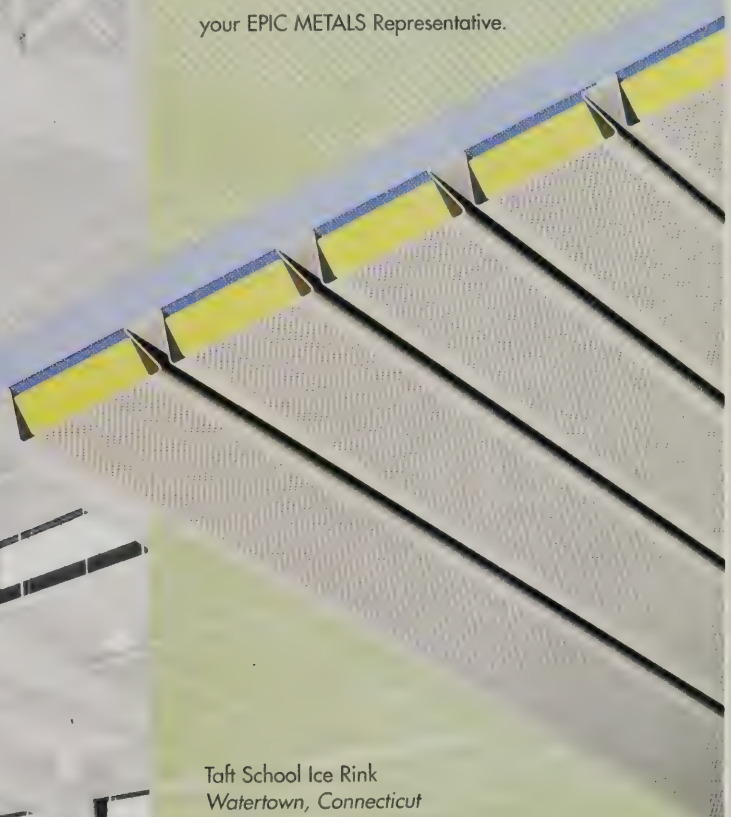

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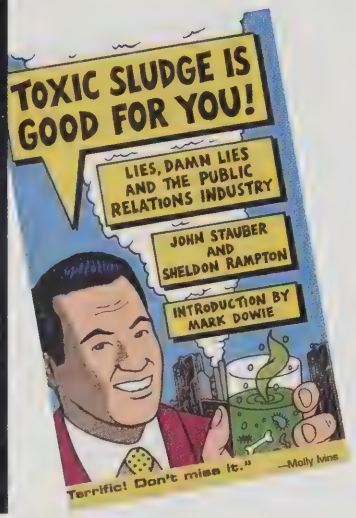
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Toxic Sludge is Good for You! Lies, Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry

by John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton

Center for Media & Democracy/ Common Courage Press, 1995

Reviewed by Julianna Waggoner

Toxic sludge is *not* good for you, but this book will be. Unfortunately, it will be good for you in the way certain medical procedures are good for you: unpleasant to endure, but ultimately beneficial.

In their discussion of the "science of ballyhoo" (as one early 1900s writer called it), the authors investigate, skewer, and meticulously footnote the actions, manipulations, and transgressions of PR professionals from Ivy Lee to current firms like Hill & Knowlton. Edward Bernays posited in 1928 that it was "possible to control and regiment the masses to our will without their knowing it." On that chilling note, the book proceeds.

The title, from a Tom Tomorrow cartoon, had surprising side effects prior to publication. The authors felt it was satirical until they received a call from a PR representative involved in the recycling of, yes, actual toxic sludge. A combination of human and industrial waste, toxic sludge, it turns out, has been rebranded as "bio-solids" and is aggressively marketed by the waste-treatment industry as fertilizer. The dangers of bio-solids are studied and debated heavily, and the PR rep was eager to have the book's title changed in order to avoid negative views from an already leery public.

The first chapter contains a deceptively mild observation: "You are probably going to eat some food today. It is possible, in fact, that you are in the process of eating *right now.*" Nauseating tidbits then unfold, such as the later revelation that the scientifically phrased "higher somatic cell count" in the milk of cows injected with growth hormones translates into layman's terms as containing "more pus."

Chapters on politics and international relations are downright horrifying. The authors argue that a significant percentage of money that masquerades as US aid to foreign countries completes its spin cycle in the pockets of prominent American PR firms. Design-firm marketers will feel almost as formidable as field mice when they discover that the marketing machine for the rest of corporate America spawns velociraptors of a caliber they might never have imagined. While architectural/ engineering marketers toddle around wielding perky smiles and establishing firm "brands," global-level mega-marketers are subsidizing and sanitizing everything from election manipulation to genocide. It's enough to make one feel grateful to be outdone.

Toxic Sludge is horrifying, but it's also strangely satisfying. Knowing how you are being manipulated can impart a sense of power to the consumer — as well as a sense of responsibility to the marketer to carefully and honorably wield the tools of the trade.

Julianna Waggoner is the marketing director for Dietz & Company Architects in Springfield, Massachusetts.

The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference

by Malcolm Gladwell

Little, Brown and Company, 2000

Reviewed by Virginia Quinn

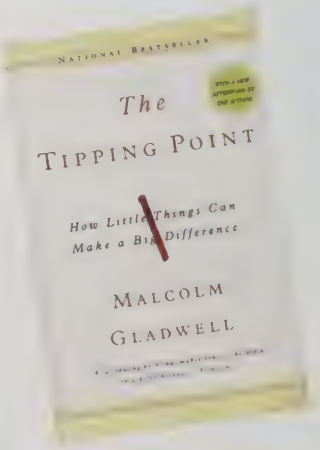
The tipping point is "that one dramatic moment when everything can change all at once." Hush Puppies shoes, for example, went from being unpopular nerd footwear to a must-have fashion accessory among the cooligentsia, just because a handful of influential youths started wearing them out to East Village clubs. New York City's astronomical crime rate in the 1980s "tipped" when municipal leaders began to focus on making small, achievable changes, such as keeping subway cars graffiti-free and apprehending fare-cheaters. In this book, Malcolm Gladwell joins the swelling ranks of recent popular business authors who apply epidemiological theories to human behavior, demonstrating how ideas and products and messages and behaviors spread, in small but significant increments, just as viruses do.

Gladwell points to three factors that play an important role in effecting tipping points. First, his "law of the few" documents the three personality types that are essential in making word-of-mouth happen: "connectors," extroverts who know lots of people spanning many different worlds; "mavens," pathologically helpful experts who accumulate knowledge then, more importantly, distribute it; and "salesmen," persuaders with a natural gift for convincing the unconvinced. Second, his concept of "stickiness" means that information has to be presented in a personally memorable way in order to move people to action. And last, the influence of "context" suggests that small changes in the external environment can have a dramatic effect on people's behavior.

Although Gladwell proposes to explore the ways we can "deliberately start and control positive epidemics of our own," the book is stronger in its presentation of theory than applications. Although hindsight makes it easy to see which factors contributed to the various examples of tipping, replicating these factors does not necessarily ensure that tipping will occur. Small changes can be made to good effect, but whether they will add up to a tipping point depends largely on a particular confluence of elements that is ultimately beyond control.

However, one factor permeates Gladwell's discussion: word-of-mouth remains the most effective form of human communication. In our sophisticated age, when we are bombarded by the carefully crafted hype of insidious marketers, how can we distinguish among the plethora of similarly packaged goods and services? More than ever before, when the sheer volume of manipulative advertisements, viral e-mails, and sexy Web sites dulls our senses, business (as well as personal) decisions come down to the personal referral of a respected connector, maven, or salesman. Savvy architects have known all along that cultivating positive word-of-mouth is the single most important thing they can do to tip their practices towards success.

Virginia Quinn is an A/E marketing consultant based in Arlington, Massachusetts. The former marketing director of Goody, Clancy & Associates, she has also served as a director of the Society for Marketing Professional Services, Boston Chapter.



Architects on Architects: 24 Essays on Influence and Inspiration

Foreword by Paul Goldberger
Edited by Susan Gray
McGraw-Hill, 1992

Reviewed by
Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA

This may be the ultimate insiders' book: you have to know the players. Who but other architects would care to know that Richard Rogers' wife Ruthie's obstetrician was the son-in-law of the original clients of the Maison de Verre? That student Norman Foster discovered that the daunting professor Paul Rudolph could be "touchingly awkward and shy"? That Sumet Jumsai once searched through Le Corbusier's trash?

Architects On Architects is a collection of 24 essays by contemporary architects writing about a major influence on their work: a fascinating building; an early employer; a favorite instructor. The premise yields some predictable and some intriguing pairings: Antoine Predock on the Alhambra. Hugh Hardy on William Van Alen. Charles Gwathmey on Louis Kahn. James Stewart Polshek on Louis Kahn. These men (and they are almost all men) write with the voice of young students, even though their own careers may have by now surpassed those of their masters; they speak of who or what deeply influenced them with the same excitement with which my students speak about these leading practioners today.

Some of the essayists raise the big questions, such as Bill Pedersen's comment: "Does designing large-scale urban buildings, for those who use them as financial instruments of profit, diminish artistic resolve and promote inevitable compromise of ideas?" Some are instructive, such as Henry Cobb's account of how a young H.H. Richardson won the Trinity Church job with a "gawky and absurd" design. Many write with the wisdom of experience, such as Robert Stern reflecting on Paul Rudolph, a former teacher who taught a heroic Modernism that Stern has spent much of his professional career reacting against, and a former Yale dean whose position Stern now holds.

The best architects do not make the best writers, as this collection reminds us. Yet the words make this book interesting. The photos do not. Rarely do they even illustrate what's being said, much less add to it. It's as if they serve only to fill the quota of some promotional agreement — promoting the work of the essayists.

Which brings us to the puzzling production complexities of this book: The editor is Susan Gray, "a people and portrait photographer and writer who has worked with a number of major corporations, magazines, and museums." (Such as....?) The "sponsoring editor" (what's that?) is Wendy Lochner. The publisher is McGraw-Hill, also the publisher of *Architectural Record*, "the magazine of the AIA." The "sponsor" is US Gypsum, also sponsor of the "Daily News" section of *Architectural Record*'s Web site. How were "today's most notable architects" selected? And what's with all the Yalies? Susan Gray does not explain. Exactly who serves whom here?

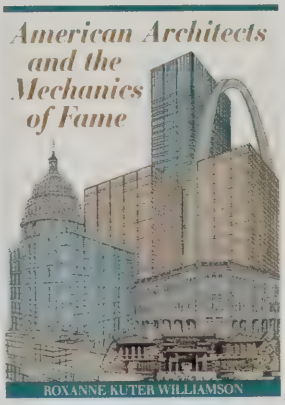
As always, who's missing is as telling as who shows up.

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, teaches the architecture studios at Smith College and maintains a practice in Boston.

American Architecture and the Mechanics of Fame

by Roxanne Kuter Williamson
University of Texas Press, 1991

Reviewed by Ann Sussman



How do you get famous in architecture? According to Roxanne Kuter Williamson, now professor emeritus at the University of Texas, the best way is to work for another architect just as he or she is about to become famous. In her book *American Architecture and the Mechanics of Fame*, Williamson argues that all well-known American architects from Jefferson to Wright, continuing through Kahn, Venturi, Scott Brown, Moore, and Gehry, are interrelated. After composing a list of more than 200 "famous" American architects, she painstakingly maps out a two-century family tree showing that all either served under each other or had a partnership or direct mentor relationship. This is even true for the one woman in Williamson's study, Julia Morgan, who had a connection to famed Chicagoans Burnham and Root.

Williamson illustrates her thesis with fascinating charts full of spaghetti-like lines that show direct employment, mentoring, or partnership relationships. In Morgan's case, for example, we learn she was once employed by Maybeck and Polk, and that the latter was the link to Burnham and Root.

Williamson stresses that the connection between famous architects "is not one of stylistic similarity." Rather, what is passed is "design power" and "an unshakable belief in one's own talent." And, in one of the more original aspects of her thesis, she argues that the timing of the connection is critical. Genius can create genius, she says, when the mentored architects "were present at the time of their employers' sudden surges of inventiveness and strong design that led to fame."

In other words, now is not the time to work for Frank Gehry; the time to do that was in 1977, before he rebuilt his Santa Monica home and garnered world-wide publicity.

A true test of her theory, as Williamson herself commented recently, would be to find out what those working with Gehry then are doing now. Even though most of her research for the book was done in the 1970s, she believes the mechanics of fame still hold — and not just in architecture, but also in music, television, and the arts in general.

Based on her research, her advice to a high-school senior who would like to become a significant architect in future history books is straightforward: Go to a college where "classmates are likely to become clients," be a joiner, take courses in journalism, and upon graduation seek out a firm just receiving its first burst of publicity, but don't stay there too long. Finally, "use whatever family connections you can and/or marry wealth."

Ann Sussman, an architect, lives in Acton, Massachusetts.

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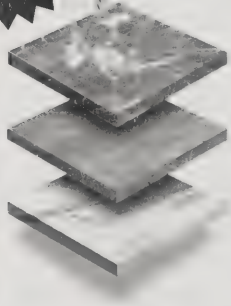

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GPI Models	www.gpimodels.com	34
G Greene	www.ggreene.com	45
Haley & Aldrich	www.haleyaldrich.com	28
H.B. Communications	www.hbcommunications.com	52
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Stone Source	www.stonesource.com	48
Stratografix	www.stratografix.com	48
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Vantage Builders	www.vantagebuildersinc.com	52
Versa-Lok Retaining Wall Systems	www.versa-lok.com	37
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Site Work

Web sites of note

STATS: Statistical Assessment Service

www.stats.org

Ever had the suspicion that a journalist must have slept through math class? Ever thought the questions in a survey might be confusing even to those who have mastered the butterfly ballot? This site is for you. STATS is a non-partisan nonprofit devoted to the accurate use of scientific and social research in public policy debate. Click on "newsletters" for the stories behind the stories.

TruthOrFiction.Com

www.truthorfiction.com

An essential service for today's e-mailing community: "Check out rumors, inspirational stories, virus warnings, humorous tales, pleas for help, urban legends, prayer requests and calls to action to see if they are TRUTH! or FICTION!" The picture of the shark attacking the helicopter? Fiction! Stories about cow-tipping? Fiction! The people who tried to barbecue a kitten? Truth! See? You have to do the research.

Playlist

www.core77.com/reactor/playlists/

Here's an original approach to hype: Exploit the supposed connection between design and music and ask designers to contribute their ideal playlists. Few building designers here, unfortunately. But industrial, graphic, product, and fashion designers are apparently keeping the music industry afloat.

PR Watch

www.prwatch.org

Investigative reporting in your service. "We help the public recognize manipulative and misleading PR practices."

PR Newswire

www.prnewswire.com/news/

Hype in the making. This is the place to see press releases as they are released. New products? Economic reports? Corporate earnings? New consumer services? Upcoming television appearances? It's all here in this weirdly fascinating snapshot of America.

We're always looking for intriguing Web sites, however misbegotten the connection to architecture. Send your candidates to: epadjen@architects.org

Other Voices by Andrei Codrescu

Cuba

photo courtesy Hilda ten Brink www.cubalalinda.net

Say "Cuba" and you've got a tree full of images. A Christmas tree, in some cases. I saw what was billed as "the first Christmas tree in Cuba" on public display in a window at the Capri Hotel in 1995. It was a pretty sorry sight, festooned with dusted-off ornaments, but tourists and Cubans alike went gaga over it. The tourists, who included evangelists on soul-gathering missions, kept pointing to it as a sign that things were changing in Cuba. Fidel Castro was himself a Catholic, whispered someone. The truth was that the Pope was coming to Cuba, and Fidel wanted him to see that religion wasn't forbidden. The truth was that Cubans were ready for a miracle and, since most of them were practicing voodoo anyway, a Christmas tree couldn't do much harm. That tree ended up on the front page of *USA Today*, and it joined a long history of hype.

Americans have been sold a multitude of Cubas. The most prevalent is the Cuba of Miami Cubans who see the island as a lost paradise that will eventually revert to its rightful owners. The state of that paradise and its eventual disposition depend on their distance from Cuba. Refugees from Castro's 1956 revolution are still more-or-less believers in his violent overthrow. They are rightly bitter, but they are getting old and aren't quite sure that anything of that kind will take place in their lifetimes. They are bitter about Castro, but they are also angry at the United States for betraying their various romantic armed forays. On the other hand, they have adjusted well and become American citizens with influence on national politics.

Newer escapees, of the Mariel boatlift era, are darker-skinned than the older exiles, and their lives in the US haven't been as successful. They are bitter, too, but the Cuba they have left behind is not one of tropical splendor. They want nothing to do with Cuba and are not at home in the US. Their image of the motherland is the inside of jails and mental hospitals. Even so, they have brought more recent Cuban culture to Yankeeland — Cuban music, salsa dancing, and vivid fashions.

Then there are second- and third-generation Cubans, born in the US, who are both fascinated and repelled by the island. They have grown up listening to stories about that fabled land, but they are not as radical as their parents. Many of them have gone against the elders by traveling to Cuba and reconnecting with families left behind.

Americans of various political flavors also own a number of other Cubas. Revolutionary tourists of the 1970s, some of whom joined the Venceremos Brigades, went to Cuba to cut sugar cane and help socialism. Few of them came back with their illusions intact, but some have blithely ignored the real misery of Cubans and held on for dear life to the dusty ideal. Memoirs are still being published that exalt Castro's republic as if it had never executed and jailed dissidents, uprooted millions, and turned the cities into barely functional ruins.

Other Cubanophiles, left-leaning but not quite so blind, point to attenuating circumstances: free medical care, free education, nearly 100 percent literacy. They blame the embargo for the suffering of the Cuban people and do their best to ignore it by taking over medicines and textbooks. They are well-intended but have classic liberal blind spots: they don't see that the vaunted literacy is useless in the presence of censorship and lack of printing paper; that the free education is almost void of modern equipment and textbooks and that, following the collapse of the transportation system, students must hitch-hike to their bare-walled schools; and that medical care without medicine or modern diagnostic equipment is only palliative.

Another group of Americans sees Cuba as a cheap playground. Theirs is the traditional view of the island, that of the pre-Castro era, when rich and not-so-rich East Coast entrepreneurs, playboys, college boys, and Kennedy boys, went to Havana to party. The new party-crowd sails or flies to Cuba with satchels full of tee-shirts and stacks of one-dollar bills. Cuban girls and boys can be had cheaply, cheaper in some cases than a box of Cohiba cigars. It's not as sordid as it sounds: the lack of a decent night-life has turned many young Cubans into thrill seekers. Few of them are professional prostitutes. They are merely bored to death.

To these Cubas you can add another: that of architects, ecologists, writers, artists, and intellectuals. Architects see Havana, with the exception of central Havana, as a treasure trove of restorable colonial buildings. Various plans to bring Havana back to its early 20th-century glory await some serious money. Ecologists see the unspoiled coral reef as unique in the tourist-ravaged Caribbean. Writers admire Cuban poetry and fiction, even though the best Cuban writers have long fled the island. Nonetheless, the settings of Ernest Hemingway, Reinaldo Arenas, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, and Alejo Carpentier are still visible. Cuban dance and film are admirable and have become fashionable in the US, prompting record promoters and cultural scouts to scour the island. Intellectuals, who are either dismayed or pained by the evolution or devolution of social ideas in Cuba, make the island a focus for their studies.

Then there are the Cubans in Cuba, but that's another story.

Is there a true Cuba amid the hype and the welter of competing images? Yes, but it's messy and expectant. When Castro dies, the place will be shaken and a number of new images will appear. Christmas trees will become banal, but our interest in this neighbor we love to love and hate, will only increase. Cuba is an image factory. ■■■

Andrei Codrescu is the author of *Ay, Cuba: a Socio-Erotic Journey* (Picador, 2000) and a regular commentator on NPR.

459

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